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Volume 2, No.338 © SS 2005 MIDEAST EDITION

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 2005

SETAF takes command of Afghan mission

Maj. Gen. Kamiya vows progress, downplays bin Laden hunt Page 4

A large photograph of Army Capt. Tristan Vasquez, a woman wearing a military helmet, glasses, and a combat uniform, holding a rifle. She is looking directly at the camera. In the background, there is a building with a sign that has a red 'X' on it.

'We know what we do'

Despite debate about women
in combat, female soldiers
are confident in the role

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Army Capt. Tristan Vasquez, 25, of Cody, Wyo., a platoon leader for the 127th Military Police Company at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Iraq, earned a Bronze Star for her actions during an ambush in an August in northwest Baghdad. Six members of Vasquez's platoon earned commendations with valor.

VINCE LITTLE/Stars and Stripes

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News Tracker ... What's new with old news

World

Alleged Macedonia war crimes: The Yugoslav war crimes tribunal unsealed an indictment Tuesday against Macedonia's former interior minister and a top police officer for the murder and torture of ethnic Albanians, the final suspects to be charged by the U.N. court, in The Hague, Netherlands.

Ljube Boskovski, 44, the former minister, and Johan Tarculovski, 30, a senior police officer, were each charged with three counts of murder, cruel treatment and wanton destruction for the August 2001 raid on the village of Ljubotini, just outside Skopje.

Kyrgyzstan elections: Protesters held a regional and a district governor captive for a second day in western Kyrgyzstan on Tuesday, and thousands rallied in the south to protest alleged election fraud and demand that President Askar Akayev resign.

The opposition accuses authorities of widespread abuses in Sunday's parliamentary runoff elections, in which Akayev secured an overwhelmingly loyal parliament. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe said the vote had significant problems.

The protesters — supporters of losing candidate Ravshan Jeyenbekov — have demanded the runoff results in Bakyat district be thrown out because of alleged fraud.

Iran nuclear program: Iran on Tuesday said economic incentives may help improve foreign relations but not permanently stop Tehran from pursuing a nuclear program it says is for generating electricity but Washington believes is for weapons.

The United States agreed last week to drop opposition to Iranian membership in the World Trade Organization and to allow some sales of spare parts for civilian aircraft as part of a European plan that offers economic incentives for Iran to permanently freeze its nuclear activities.

Chechen rebel reward: Russia paid \$10 million for information that helped it track down a Chechen rebel leader who was killed last week in a special forces operation, its security service said Tuesday.

The Federal Security Service also said it would offer the same reward for Shamil Basayev, the Chechen warlord who claimed responsibility for September's school hostage-taking in southern Russia that killed 330.

Bobby Fischer detention: Chess legend Bobby Fischer shouldn't be exempted from Japan's rule that foreigners who are ordered deported must be sent to their homeland, Japan's top immigration official said Tuesday.

Fischer and his supporters are asking that he be allowed to go to Iceland, where he has been granted a special passport for foreigners, instead of the United States, where Japan has ordered him sent.

Japanese authorities have detained him since July for allegedly trying to leave for the Philippines on a revoked U.S. passport.

Washington has sought Fischer — who became world chess champion in a 1972 match in Iceland against the Soviet Union's Boris Spassky — on charges of violating international sanctions against the former Yugoslavia by playing chess there in 1992.

States

Big Dig leaks: The independent engineering specialist who led an investigation into leaks at the \$14.6 billion Big Dig project says he can no longer vouch for the safety of its tunnels.

"I am now unable to express an opinion as to the safety of the I-93 portion of the Central Artery," Jack K. Lemley wrote in a March 9 letter to the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority.

The project buried Interstate 93 underneath downtown Boston and connected the



Beauty queen on trial: Sharron Nicole Redmond demonstrates how she held the gun when she shot Kevin Shorter as she backed away in her car, during her testimony Monday in Savannah, Ga. Redmond, 23, is charged with murdering Shorter in a confrontation outside the home of another woman he was dating, four months after she was crowned Miss Savannah 2003. She has admitted firing the gun, but claims it was in self-defense.

Massachusetts Turnpike to Logan International Airport.

Lemley said new information has surfaced that more than 40 large sections of tunnel wall contain construction defects and that fireproofing material has been damaged by leaks.

Gary Condit lawsuit: Former California congressman Gary Condit has won an undisclosed sum of money and an apology from writer Dominick Dunne over his claims about the lawmaker's role in the 2001 disappearance of intern Chandra Levy, according to media reports.

In a statement, Dunne said he did "not say or intend to imply that Mr. Condit was complicit in her disappearance, and to the extent my comments may have been misinterpreted, I apologize for them," The Sacramento Bee reported.

On "ET Online" in January 2002, Dunne was quoted as suggesting Levy was taken away by someone on a motorcycle as a favor to Condit. On "Larry King Live" in February 2002, Dunne stated: "I believe firmly that he knows more than what he has ever said."

Suspicious bomb attack: Prosecutors have decided against a retrial of a former medical examiner accused of staging a bizarre bomb attack against himself.

A mistrial was declared March 1 after three weeks of testimony against former Shelby County Medical Examiner Dr. O.C. Smith in Memphis, Tenn. The jury deadlocked 9-3 for acquittal.

Smith was found in a county morgue stairwell in June 2002 with his feet, hands and head wrapped in barbed wire and a bomb hung around his neck. Smith said he was attacked by an unknown assailant who threw a caustic chemical in his face. Investigators eventually concluded the attack was staged.

Prosecutors claimed he suffered from a mental disorder that caused him to crave attention.

Phil Spector trial: Prosecutors are asking a judge to permit evidence at Phil Spector's murder trial that the record producer has a history of pulling guns on women, according to court filings.

The prosecution motion, unsealed Monday in Los Angeles, lists nine occasions dating to 1972 when Spector allegedly pointed a gun at someone, including women he dated, folk singer and songwriter Leonard Cohen, a television producer and parking valets at the Beverly Hills Hotel.

Spector, 65, who created rock 'n' roll's

"Wall of Sound" recording technique, claims B-movie actress Lana Clarkson committed suicide at his home in suburban Alhambra. He remains free on \$1 million bail.

Prison hostages trial: An inmate defending himself against charges he raped a guard and held her captive in a prison watchtower in Phoenix for 15 days politely questioned prospective jurors about whether they had seen the hostage crisis on television.

Wassenaar, 41, who is serving time for armed robbery and assault, is charged with sexual assault, kidnapping, assault and attempted murder.

Laci Peterson conviction: Scott Peterson's lawyers said in court papers that newly discovered evidence could have spared the former fertilizer salesman from a death sentence in the slaying of his pregnant wife.

The motion unsealed Monday in Redwood City, Calif., requested a new trial based on evidence allegedly withheld by prosecutors and improperly presented, along with legal errors and jury misconduct.

Defense lawyer Mark Geragos said prosecutors withheld evidence that a state prison inmate claimed he heard that Laci Peterson had interrupted a burglary at a neighbor's home in Modesto on Dec. 24, 2002 — the day she disappeared. Scott Peterson claims he went fishing that day, and Geragos says the tip "points to the conclusion that Laci was alive after Scott left for the day."

But prosecutor David Harris said the burglary happened two days after Laci Peterson's disappearance. He said the evidence would not have changed the verdict.

Business

Pooh royalties rules: A judge has ruled that The Walt Disney Company cannot recoup about \$524,000 of what it spent fighting a 13-year lawsuit over royalties on Winnie the Pooh movies.

Superior Court Judge Carolyn B. Kuhl on Monday refused to allow Disney to recoup some of the costs of depositions, mediation and accounting referee fees. The judge said she will rule later on several other costs.

The heirs to a literary agent who owned the U.S. rights to the Pooh character granted Disney their use in 1961 in exchange for a share of revenues from Pooh products.

But the lawsuit claimed Disney owed millions of dollars in royalties for Pooh movies released on DVD — a technology that didn't exist when the original contract was signed.

Stories and photo from The Associated Press

5 killed in 3 car bombings across Baghdad

GI almond dead;
Kurdish, Shites
agree to convene
new parliament

The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Three car bombs exploded in Baghdad, killing at least five people, police said, as Kurdish and Shiite leaders agreed to convene Iraq's new parliament on Wednesday, despite their apparent failure to iron out some wrinkles in their deal to form a coalition government.

A U.S. soldier was killed by a car bomb in Baghdad and another six were wounded, but the military did not say if it was one of the three attacks reported by Iraqi police and eyewitnesses — one of which had targeted an American military convoy.

The car bomb targeting a U.S. military convoy exploded on a road about 500 yards from the main avenue leading to Baghdad's international airport, police Capt. Thahir Talib said.

Four civilians were killed and seven were wounded, including two police officers, he said. The explosion took place in the Amel neighborhood about six miles from the airport.

In a report unconfirmed by U.S. officials, witnesses said some U.S. troops were also wounded. When U.S. forces arrived on the scene to evacuate them, another car bomb exploded, wounding more troops. One Humvee was destroyed and two civilian cars were in flames, witnesses said.

A U.S. military spokesman said he was checking into the report, but never replied.

A later statement issued by the U.S. military said a soldier were



Iraqis look over a burning truck south of Baghdad on Tuesday. Witnesses reported that the truck was struck by a rocket-propelled grenade while traveling with a U.S. military convoy.

Another suicide car bomb exploded in northeastern Baghdad, killing one child and wounding at least four people, including a police officer, police Col. Muhannad Sadoun said. The bomber was trying to hit a traffic police patrol but crashed into a tree, Sadoun said.

Separately, a U.S. Marine with the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force died Monday in Anbar, a troubled province that has been a hotbed of guerrilla activity and includes the cities of Fallujah, Ramadi and Qaim, officials said Tuesday.

Also on Tuesday, Shiite officials said they failed to reach a final agreement in talks with both the Kurds and the country's Sunni Arab community. But those failures were not enough to pre-

vent the 275-member National Assembly from convening.

Talks with Sunni Arabs focused on naming a parliament speaker for the 275-member National Assembly that is to convene for the first time since Jan. 30 elections. It remained unclear if they would present a candidate Wednesday.

"The Kurds want to make some amendments on the deal and we are going to finish soon, Thursday to be exact. We do not want to impose any name from our side regarding the post of the parliament speaker. We want the Sunnis to nominate some persons for this post, but till now they have not done this," alliance member Ali al-Dabagh told The Associated Press after talks with Sunni leaders.

Sunni Arabs, who make up only about 20 percent of the population but were the dominant group under Saddam's regime, largely stayed away from the elections — either to honor a boycott call or because they feared being attacked at the polls by insurgents.

They are thought to make up the core of the insurgency and including Sunni Arabs in a future government or in the political process is seen as a way to isolate the militants.

In northern Iraq, insurgents blew up an oil pipeline that connects the Kirkuk oil fields with a refinery in Beiji, according to an official in the northern Oil Company. The pipeline is used only to pipe oil domestically, said the official, who asked not to be named. He did not have details on the extent of the damage.

On Monday, the government said security forces in Saddam Hussein's hometown captured two of the ousted dictator's relatives, who allegedly were helping insurgents launch attacks in Iraq.

The two were identified as one-time Saddam bodyguard Marwan Taher Abdul Rashid and his cousin, Abdullah Maher Abdul Rashid — who also was the brother-in-law of Saddam's son, Qusai, state-run Iraqiya television reported.

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Monday, at least 1,514 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,155 died as a result of hostile action, according to the Defense Department.

The figures include four military civilians.

The AP count is four higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 10 a.m. EST Monday.

The British military has reported 86 deaths; Italy, 20; Ukraine, 18; Poland, 17; Spain, 11; Bulgaria, eight; Slovakia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each, and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary, Kazakhstan and Latvia one death each.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

■ A soldier was killed by small-arms fire Friday in Mosul.

The latest identifications reported by the military:

■ Army Spc. Nicholas E. Wilson, 21, Glendale, Ariz.; died Friday in a vehicle accident in Ramadi; assigned to the 1st Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, Camp Casey, South Korea.

■ Army Staff Sgt. Donald D. Griffith, Jr., 29, Mechanicsville, Iowa; was killed Friday in Tal Afar; assigned to the 2nd Squadron, 14th Cavalry Regiment, Fort Lewis, Wash.

Italy sets troop withdrawal date

ROME — Premier Silvio Berlusconi said Tuesday that Italy will start withdrawing its 3,000 troops in Iraq in September, Italian news agencies reported.

"Already in September we will begin a progressive reduction of the number of our soldiers in Iraq," Berlusconi was quoted as saying during a taping of a state TV talk show.

Withdrawing Italian troops "will depend on the capability of the Iraqi government to give itself structures for acceptable security," the ANSA news agency quoted Berlusconi as saying.

On Tuesday, the Italian contingent suffered its 21st casualty in Iraq when a soldier accidentally shot himself in the head during target practice, officials said.

Bulgaria leader calls for slow pullout

SOFIA, Bulgaria — President Georgi Parvanov called Tuesday for a partial withdrawal of the country's troops from Iraq, but insisted that as a coalition partner Bulgarian troops should remain there until the end of the year.

Parvanov made his remarks a week after a Bulgarian soldier was killed by U.S. troops in Iraq, and he acknowledged that the incident had renewed public debate about a possible withdrawal of troops. Bulgaria has a 460-member infantry battalion serving under Polish command in the southern Iraqi city of Diwaniya.

Parvanov, who is also supreme commander of the army, said that by the end of this year the battalion could be withdrawn from Iraq.

"This won't be a hasty, but a dignified pullout," he said.

From The Associated Press/AP-WIS-03-15-05 142952T

Myers says criminals are playing a bigger role in Iraq's insurgency

The Associated Press

CAMP VICTORY, Iraq — Organized crime and criminals-for-hire appear to be taking a more prominent role in the insurgency, although former Saddam Hussein loyalists and foreign fighters still pose a major threat, the top U.S. general said Tuesday.

Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters at this U.S. base near Baghdad International Airport that he was told during meetings here and elsewhere in Iraq on Monday that more of the people being captured by U.S. and Iraqi forces appear to be criminals.

"There are elements of this insurgency that are a lot more criminal in nature than they are true insurgents," he said in an interview before he departed for Kabul, Afghanistan, the third leg of a trip that began Sunday in Egypt. He was meeting Tuesday with President Hamid Karzai.

On his first trip to Iraq since the Jan. 30 elections for a national assembly, Myers predicted that the violence would increase still further as a new round of elections is held in late spring or early summer. "So there's a long way to go" before Iraq is stable enough for its own forces to take over for the 140,000 or so U.S. troops here now, he said.

U.S. and Iraqi officials have said from the start of the insurgency nearly two years ago that criminals are behind

some of the violence. But Myers suggested they may be taking a bigger role as the counterinsurgency weeds out more foreign terrorists and former Saddam supporters.

"That may be a larger piece of what we're seeing out there, as opposed to hardcore insurgents," he said. Some

are "people just executing crimes to make money and to gain influence. Some aim to intimidate, and some are just organized crime has done in other parts of the world."

Myers said this was "not a headline," but was "just a sense of what we're seeing" from talking to U.S. and Iraqi officers on Tuesday, when he met with U.S. commanders in the northern city of Mosul and with U.S. and senior Iraqi officials in Tikrit, at a training range for Iraqi army recruits.

Myers also said Tuesday that there will be a series of assessments made this year on whether and when reductions can be made. The first of those will come in June. A year ago at this time, U.S. officials were hoping to reduce the U.S. force to about 105,000, in late March the insurgency grew suddenly more deadly, and additional forces had to be summoned.

Myers

Commander vows progress in Afghanistan

BY STEPHEN GRAHAM
The Associated Press

BAGRAM, Afghanistan — The new operational commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan promised Tuesday to protect the country's parliamentary elections in the fall and played down the unsuccessful hunt for Osama bin Laden and other top al-Qaida and Taliban leaders.

Maj. Gen. Jason Kamiya took command of the 18,000-strong U.S.-led coalition in Afghanistan as American troops based in Europe rotate into the country ahead of parliamentary elections expected in September.

"We will continue to focus our energy, No. 1, on supporting the government of Afghanistan's vision," Kamiya told reporters at Bagram Air Base, north of Kabul. "We have the election coming up ..., and that will be one of our major focuses."

Afghanistan last year passed a new con-

Kamiya, new leader of U.S.-led coalition, puts emphasis on elections, not bin Laden

stitution and held a landmark presidential election won in a landslide by Hamid Karzai despite threats from Taliban militants to disrupt the ballot.

U.S. commanders say their operations helped prevent attacks on the vote. Since then, troops increasingly have focused on supporting local officials and encouraging reconstruction in former Taliban strongholds.

However, fugitives such as bin Laden and Taliban chief Mullah Omar remain at large, as hundreds of militants still mount ambushes and bombings on Afghan and foreign troops.

"The success of this mission should not be predicated upon the amount of fugitives or threat groups we remove," Kamiya said.

"Instead, it should be focused on increasing the capacity, increasing the reach of the Afghan central government."

Kamiya, the commander of the Vicenza, Italy-based Southern European Task Force (Airborne), took over from Maj. Gen. Eric Olson of the Hawaii-based 25th Infantry Division at a ceremony in an aircraft hangar that also was attended by the overall U.S. commander in Afghanistan, Lt. Gen. David Barno.

Barno told a news conference that the hunt for bin Laden and other militant leaders would continue, but he acknowledged that the trail remained cold.

"We don't know where he is. If we had a good definition we'd obviously have appre-

hended him," Barno said of the al-Qaida leader, whose some analysts suspect may be hiding near the rugged border with Pakistan.

"We will be successful eventually, but it is a very, very difficult challenge given the immensity of the territory involved, the mountainous terrain, the tough weather."

Barno, who also is expected to leave Afghanistan soon, suggested that the insurgency maintained by Taliban-led militants was losing steam. The Afghan and American governments would decide whether U.S. military bases such as Bagram, which is being equipped with a new runway, would become permanent, Barno said, but he added that it was too early to say when U.S. troop levels might fall.

"We'll be assessing that as the security situation changes, as it gets better potentially, as the Afghan national army and police continue to grow and be more effective," he said.

SETAF assumes command of U.S. Afghan mission

BY KENT HARRIS
Stars and Stripes

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — The lightning bolt has given way to the lion.

The Southern European Task Force (Airborne) took over authority of Combined/Joint Task Force-76 from the 25th Infantry Division in a ceremony Tuesday.

SETAF, whose patches feature *Si*, *Ma*'s lion, becomes the first nondivision size element to run the mission in Afghanistan since the United States forced out the ruling Taliban government following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

"This is the most well-prepared group of soldiers that I have ever handed a mission over to in my 32 years in the United States Army," said Maj. Gen. Eric Olson, the 25th ID commander. He and his headquarters staff boarded a military transport plane shortly after the ceremony and headed back to Hawaii.

Maj. Gen. Jason Kamiya, the SETAF commander, will lead a force of about 18,000 troops — anchored by thousands of airborne soldiers from the 173rd Airborne Brigade and the 1st Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division. But a host of other active and reserve elements from the Army, Marines, Air Force, Navy and coalition partners will fall under the command.

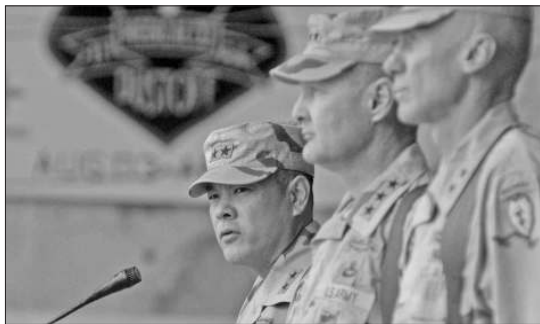
It's not the first time SETAF has led a joint task force in a peacekeeping operation in a country torn by years of fighting. In 2003, it headed a joint operation about a third of the size of the force in Afghanistan force to help bring peace to Liberia.

Kamiya said his troops are prepared to carry on the tasks the 25th ID and those before them began.

"We are well-trained, well-resourced and are ready for the challenges ahead," he said.

Many elements of the 25th's task force still are in country and will remain until they've shown their replacements the ropes. The 1st Battalion, 508th Infantry Regiment, a part of the SETAF force in Vicenza, Italy, already is on the ground and conducting operations. But many other elements won't arrive for weeks.

Several hundred soldiers and Marines, some leaving and some newly arrived, watched the ceremony in the base's medevac hangar. Also in attendance: represen-



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL ABRAMS/Stars and Stripes

At Tuesday's transfer of authority ceremony at Bagram Air Base, new Combined/Joint Task Force-76 commander Maj. Gen. Jason Kamiya, left, makes his first speech as commander. Lt. Gen. David Barno, Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan commander, center, and Maj. Gen. Eric Olson, outgoing CJTF-76 commander, listen.

tatives from about a dozen coalition countries, ambassadors from the United States and Canada, Secretary of the Army Francis Harvey, Afghan government officials and Lt. Gen. David Barno, the top American commander in country.

Barno praised the efforts of Olson and the 25th during their year of operations. Among the highlights he listed: "a stunningly successful Afghan election" that produced President Hamid Karzai, the capture or death of dozens of Taliban leaders and the expansion of provincial reconstruction teams from four to 19 across the country.

Olson asked for a moment of silence for the more than 20 troops in the task force killed in the last year. He said he considered the mission the most important in his career.

An Air Force B-1 bomber capped the ceremony, flying by well under the clouds that doused the base with rain. The country's seven-year drought appears to be over. But the mission has just begun for SETAF.

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Army secretary: No plans to alter number of troops

BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan — The Army's civilian leader made his first visit Tuesday to a country where thousands of soldiers have fought the war on terror the last four years.

Secretary of the Army Francis Harvey, who took office on Nov. 19, said he was visiting to see the troops in theater and talk with local commanders to make sure they had what they needed.

Asked about troop levels in Afghanistan and Iraq, he seemed to indicate that no immediate changes were planned. "There's not a timetable on troops in either theater," he said. "It depends on conditions."

Harvey spoke to a small group of reporters just after Lt. Gen. David Barno, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, had answered a few questions.

Barno, expected to give up his command early next month, said coalition forces had achieved "many successes across the board" in the last year.

He said there were fewer attacks on coalition forces in February than in any other month in the last two years. He said he expects that to change somewhat in April and May as the weather improves, allowing anti-coalition forces more mobility.

Asked about the possibility of permanent American bases in country, Barno pointed to remarks that Afghan President Hamid Karzai made during his election campaign about wanting a long-term relationship with the United States.

He said such issues would not be decided by the U.S. military in any case, but by the respective governments of both countries.

— Kent Harris



The Combined/Joint Task Force-76 color guard is shown during the transfer of authority ceremony at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan.

Debate aside, women know combat roles

Female soldiers face same stresses as male troops

BY VINCE LITTLE
Stars and Stripes

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq — Army Capt. Tristan Vasquez of the 127th Military Police Company isn't too fazed by the debate over what roles women should play in combat.

The 25-year-old officer from Cody, Wyo., already has a Bronze Star Medal on her résumé for valor under fire during an ambush in northwest Baghdad last August. Just days later, she helped repel an insurgent attack on the Al-Shoula Iraqi Police Station, which brought an additional commendation.

"We joke around all the time and say there are no women in combat," she said. "That's all right, though. We know what we do."

Vasquez, a platoon leader for the Hanau, Germany-based unit that functions in Iraq under the 2nd Brigade Combat Team of the 10th Mountain Division, is among several women who fill vital roles within the company as it patrols Baghdad. It might not be classified as combat, but for the last 11 months, women certainly worked on the front lines.

"They say it's an asymmetrical battlefield," said Capt. Kevin Hanrahan, of Whitman, Mass., the 127th Military Police Company commander. "Women are not supposed to be in combat. The fact of the matter is they are in combat."

Sitting in the rear Humvee of a three-vehicle convoy that day in August, Vasquez said they were headed to the Al-Gazzalia Iraqi Police Station — one of 19 the company monitors — when her driver noticed something odd.

"My driver, she goes, 'There's no cars on the road,'" Vasquez said. "That's when we had an RPG land in the lead vehicle and another go underneath the middle vehicle. One struck my window right where my head is. Another went over the back hatch."

"I'm very thankful for our armored vehicle. It saved my life, saved my driver's life and probably saved my gunner from either death or dismemberment."

Under constant gunfire in the 140-degree heat, Vasquez and others fought for nearly 90 minutes. They treated wounded soldiers and worked to save a gunner trapped under a flipped Humvee. They ultimately freed him, but he later died from his injuries.

Six members of Vasquez's platoon earned commendations with valor.

"It was so hot, you literally had to stop fighting to drink water," she said. "It's amazing what soldiers can do. They're incredible individuals. We put them under so many different kinds of stresses. They do an amazing job."

First Lt. Sara Skinner, 27, of Vassar, Mich., another platoon leader, who's on her second tour of Iraq, received the Purple Heart after sustaining shrapnel wounds to her neck and right arm from a mortar attack in early November.

"I went right through my combat patch," Skinner said. "It was not really anything serious. I've seen so many people seriously injured that I feel a little weird about getting the Purple Heart."

"When soldiers go through something like that, it's usually best to put them right back to work," she said. "You don't want them to dwell on things. If they take time off, they'll become more afraid to go back out; gives them too much time to think."

First Lt. Amy Clements, 24, of Littleton, Colo., the company's executive officer, faced similar perils as a platoon leader during the first stage of the unit's deployment. Each time they ventured outside the wire, threats loomed from possible sniper attacks, roadside bombs, ambushes, vehicle bombs and suicide bombers.

"I faced the same thing they (male soldiers) did for five to six days a week," she said. "You witness a lot of scary stuff you never want to see again. You hope nobody else has to face it, either."

"As a platoon leader, part of the burden you carry is trying to protect your soldiers — especially the younger ones — from seeing things like dead bodies. They are dramatic images. Stuff like that sticks with you, even the more senior soldiers. Eventually, it starts to get to everybody."

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PHOTOS BY VINCE LITTLE/Stars and Stripes

Army Capt. Tristan Vasquez, 25, of Cody, Wyo., a platoon leader for the 127th Military Police Company at Forward Operating Base Falcon, Iraq, earned a Bronze Star for her actions last August during an ambush in northwest Baghdad.

Age-old military woe gets a modern twist when both spouses are serving in Iraq

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq — Three female Army officers in the 127th Military Police Company symbolize the struggles and sacrifices of dual-military couples around the globe in the U.S.-led war on terrorism.

Except for a few weeks here and there, Capt. Tristan Vasquez, 1st Lt. Amy Clements and 1st Lt. Sara Skinner have essentially been separated from their husbands — all infantrymen assigned to the 1st Armored Division at Friedberg, Germany — for roughly two years.

"People are making sacrifices that no one ever sees," said Capt. Kevin Hanrahan, the 127th Military Police Company commander. "Not only are they taking part in combat, they're altering their lives by being separated from their husbands. These are true American patriots."

Skinner and her husband, 1st Lt. Bruce Skinner, both graduates of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 2002, were in Iraq at the same time from June 2003 to March 2004 and found ways to visit each other.

"We had about two months together in Germany before I came back here in September," she said. "That's the only two months we've lived together in our marriage."

"But that's pretty normal right now. Lots of military couples are going through the same thing. A lot of people think it's impossible."

Skinner points to soldiers during separation from War II, who often endured years of separation from spouses. "We have it a lot better than them. We've got e-mail, phones, regular mail," she added. "Our living conditions are a lot better. Generations before us had it a lot worse and they made it through."

Married in March 2003 around the start of the Iraq war, Vasquez and husband, Jose, a first lieutenant, spent about two weeks together before he was sent to Camp Casey, South Korea. After military police training, she went to Hannu, Germany.



Army 1st Lt. Amy Clements lived with her husband, Adam, also a first lieutenant, for about four months before he deployed to Iraq.

Their paths crossed briefly last year during the 1st Armored Division's three-month exercise in Iraq. "It's coming up on our two-year anniversary, and we've lived together for about two months and three weeks total," Tristan Vasquez said. "The rest we've given to the Army."

Both are slated for a return to Iraq within the next year, and they've opted to stick with the military for the long haul.

"There's a better chance I'll see my husband here in Iraq than if I stay in Germany," she added. "I'll take the chance."

Clements and her husband, Adam, also a first lieutenant, both graduated from West Point in 2002. Both assigned to different bases in Germany, they lived together for about four months before he deployed to Iraq.

"Every time we see each other, it's like a honeymoon. I think we're on our eighth," she said.

But given the U.S. military's current climate, the three women certainly don't consider themselves unique.

"The three of us are not the only ones in dual-military marriages," Clements said.

"There are a lot of them out there, and they all face these same struggles and hardships."

"You just have to keep working for the times you do get to spend together."

— Vince Little

"I faced the same thing they (male soldiers) did for five to six days a week. You witness a lot of scary stuff you never want to see again."

1st Lt. Amy Clements

127th Military Police Company

"We joke around all the time and say there are no women in combat. That's all right, though. We know what we do."



Vasquez

Capt. Tristan Vasquez
127th Military Police Company



PHOTOS BY STEVE MRAZ/Stars and Stripes

Emiluz Davila, 5, approaches her father, Sgt. Manuel Davila, at a welcome-home ceremony for the 272nd Military Police Company on Monday evening. Almost 150 soldiers returned from Iraq following a yearlong deployment. The ceremony took place at Sullivan Barracks Gymnasium in Mannheim, Germany.

272nd Military Police eagerly welcomed back to Germany

BY STEVE MRAZ
Stars and Stripes

MANNHEIM, Germany — Emiluz Davila did not want to wait through the pomp and circumstance of the 272nd Military Police Company's welcome home ceremony Monday evening.

After seeing her father, Sgt. Manuel Davila, file into the Sullivan Barracks Gymnasium and rigidly stand at attention, the 5-year-old girl darted to her dad.

Unbeknownst to the child, a structured ceremony welcoming the 149 soldiers home from a yearlong deployment in Iraq still had to take place. Emiluz seemed bewildered that her father would not immediately respond. Soldiers near Davila repressed chuckles while trying to keep a stoic air.

"If I could have, I would have done like the little girl did," said Melenda Davis, who leapt into the arms of her husband, Sgt. Joseph Davis, after the ceremony.

Monday's event marked the end of a crucial mission for the company, which is part of the 95th Military Police Battalion of the 21st Theater Support Command. While in Iraq, the 272nd secured Iraqi police stations and instructed Iraqis at the Iraqi Police Academy. With its return, the unit became the last major element of the 21st TSC to come home.

One of the unit's foremost missions in Iraq was to create a stable police force in order to provide a secure environment for democracy to flourish. Soldiers with the 272nd said Monday evening that the police forces they helped train were well on their way.

Because of the oppression they lived under for de-



Melenda Davis leaps into the arms of her husband, Sgt. Joseph Davis, upon his return.

cadres, the Iraqis were not used to taking initiative and making decisions, said 1st Lt. Tricia Tyler, acting company commander.

"We got to see a big improvement over there," she said. "They began actively policing rather than being reactive."

But the 272nd or "Fighting Deuce" did not complete its mission without sacrifice: Pfc. Cole Larsen died Nov. 13, when his military vehicle rolled over after being hit by a civilian vehicle in Baghdad.

The company soldiered on, however, and one of its successes was working with Iraqi police officers to provide security during Iraq's Jan. 30 election, Tyler said.

"They're proven," said Sgt. Michael Gillens, a team leader with the 272nd MPC. "With time, they'll be up to speed."

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U.S. overstating number of Iraqis trained, GAO says

Agency: Totals of security forces include many who have since left

BY MARK MAZZETTI
Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — U.S. commanders and Bush administration officials are overstating the number of Iraqi security forces on duty, providing an inaccurate picture of the training mission that is the U.S. military's "exit strategy" in Iraq, a government audit agency reported Monday.

The Pentagon in its latest figures said 142,000 Iraqis had been trained as police and soldiers. But the Government Accountability Office said that figure included tens of thousands of Iraqi policemen who left their jobs with no explanation.

The GAO also said the State Department six months ago ceased providing government auditors with information about the number of Iraqi troops issued flak vests, weapons and communications equipment.

The unreliability of the data coming from Baghdad makes it difficult to provide an accurate accounting of the billions of dollars the U.S. government is spending to train and equip Iraq's army and police force, a GAO official told a congressional committee Monday.

"Without reliable information, Congress may find it difficult to judge how federal funds are achieving the goal of transferring security responsibilities to the Iraqis," Joseph A. Christoff, the GAO's director of international affairs and trade, told the House Government Reform subcommittee on international relations.

Although the Defense Department has conducted several internal evaluations of the U.S. training mission in Iraq, the GAO is the first government agency to challenge as inflated the figures

the Pentagon uses to chart the progress of Iraqi troops.

Specifically, the GAO criticized the Pentagon's decision to include in its totals of trained and equipped Iraqi troops "tens of thousands" of police officers absent without leave. The most recent Pentagon figures show nearly 82,000 Iraqis have gone through U.S. police training.

"If you are reporting AWOLs in your numbers, I think there's some inaccuracy in your reporting," Christoff said after the hearing.

The progress of the training mission has become a politically charged issue, with Democrats in Congress charging that the Bush administration is misrepresenting the number of trained Iraqis at work.

During confirmation hearings for Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, senators challenged her assertion that the Pentagon had trained more than 120,000 Iraqi policemen and soldiers. That number, they said, included more than 50,000 police officers who were given as little as three weeks of basic training.

"Time and again this administration has tried to leave the American people with the impression that Iraq has well over 100,000 fully trained, fully committed military police and personnel. And that is simply not true," Sen. Joseph R. Biden Jr. of Delaware, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, told Rice.

At Monday's hearing, Defense Department officials defended the practice of including in the official totals policemen who had gone AWOL. Unlike Iraqi soldiers, they said, police officers do not sleep in barracks and are not closely tracked by the Interior Ministry.

Air Force cutting costs amid shortfall projection in billions

BY SCOTT SCHONAUER
Stars and Stripes

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — The rising cost of the war on terrorism and in Iraq is forcing major Air Force commands, including U.S. bases in Europe, to cut costs and help avoid a "budget crisis."

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. John P. Jumper has ordered the command to slash spending and delay programs considered a lower priority compared to the war.

The service projects to be \$3 billion short in maintenance and operations and have a \$733 million shortfall in military personnel funding by the end of the fiscal

year, Jumper told commanders in a March 1 message.

Gen. Robert H. "Doc" Foglesong, the top Air Force commander in Europe, already has directed headquarters staff and each base in the region to reduce spending, headquarters spokesman Capt. Chris Watt said Tuesday.

"We knew this fiscal year's budget was going to be tight," Watt said in an e-mail to Stars and Stripes. "Months ago, commanders were advised to look closely at their individual budgets to ensure they continue to meet mission readiness as well as provide for the safety and wellness of their troops and quality of life programs."

The headquarters staff and the bases

plan to reduce spending by cutting travel costs, the purchase of supplies and equipment and new civilian hires, Watt added.

Jumper issued the order to cut costs as the Bush administration's \$75 billion 2005 supplemental military funding bill awaits approval in Congress. He told commanders that the top two priorities would be to pay for the war on terrorism and efforts to rotate troops for those operations.

"Facilities, business operations, travel, administrative functions, non-deployment-related training and new contracts rank as lower priorities," Jumper said in the memo. "These areas should be slowed significantly through the end of the fiscal year."

In addition to bases in Europe, other commands already are making some cuts, according to an Air Force press release.

The Air Mobility Command isn't spending as much on travel, supplies and equipment that "don't affect current combat operations," officials said. Facility projects have been limited to emergency work only.

The cuts will not affect flying operations, required maintenance and all "war-related activities."

The Air Force Space Command has delayed some contracts, facility projects, travel, equipment purchases and supplies that are not directly related to the war.

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GI accused in assault case awaits verdict

BY ANGELA K. BROWN

The Associated Press

FORT HOOD, Texas — An Army lieutenant laughed when soldiers under his command threw an Iraqi civilian into the Tigris River, saying they had a bet with another platoon over who would do that first, a former soldier testified Tuesday at the officer's assault trial.

A military judge began deliberating the charge against Lt. Jack Saville after the one-hour court-martial.

Saville, who pleaded guilty Monday to charges involving two other Iraqis, did not give the order to throw the civilian into the river that day in December 2003 near Balad, but he knew his platoon sergeant had ordered the soldiers to take a random Iraqi, former soldier Terry Bowman testified. The Iraqis survived.

Defense attorney Frank Spinner said the government's two witnesses did not provide evidence to convict Saville on a charge of aggravated assault, saying that knowing about an incident does not constitute aiding and abetting.

Saville, 25, faces three years if convicted. He faced nine years in a military prison after pleading guilty Monday to assault and other crimes in a separate incident in early 2004. Those charges alleged that he ordered his troops to force two other Iraqis into the Tigris River at Samarra for violating curfew.

Saville had been charged with manslaughter in the reported death of one but that charge — along with counts of sexual abuse and lying to investigators — was dropped in a plea deal. Defense lawyers maintained the Iraqi survived.

Monday's deal included an agreement by Saville to testify against a high-ranking officer accused of ordering him and other soldiers to execute certain Iraqi suspects if they caught them.

Saville said Capt. Matthew Cunningham, his company commander, gave him the names of five Iraqis who "were not to come back alive" if they were caught during raids in Samarra on Jan. 3, 2004. Cunningham, stationed at Fort Carson, Colo., is under investigation for allegedly giving illegal orders to kill Iraqi detainees, said Lt. Col. Jonathan Withington, a Fort Hood spokesman.

Captain on trial for abuse

FORT CARSON, Colorado — The trial of an Army captain accused of assaulting Iraqi civilians began with a witness testifying the officer saw himself as a "sheik" or a "king" of the Iraqi desert town under his supervision.

Capt. Shawn L. Martin faces eight counts of assault and one count each of obstruction of justice and conduct unbecoming of an officer. Army officials say Martin faces 44 years in prison if convicted.

Joseph Heron testified Monday that after an Army vehicle was damaged by a bomb, he saw Martin point a gun at the head of an Iraqi detainee and shout, "What do you know about this? If you don't tell me, I swear I'll kill you."

Prosecutors have also said Martin beat Iraqis with an aluminum baseball bat and ordered them to dig their own graves.

Staff Sgt. Robert Cureton, who served as Martin's bodyguard, said his superior ordered him to shoot near the Iraqi and the Iraqi. He said he then pointed his pistol at him and demanded, "Fire your [expletive] weapon!"

From The Associated Press



Members of a hazardous material team walk from the Pentagon on Monday after test results detected the presence of chemical or biological agents at the Pentagon's mail delivery building. Officials shut down the facility, which is in a separate building on the northwest side of the Pentagon grounds. Another nearby facility that handles mail for the Pentagon also was shut down.

Anthrax suspected at Pentagon

Tests detected presence in mailrooms at headquarters, nearby facility

BY JOHN J. LUMPKIN

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Another postal facility was closed Tuesday as concern spread over the detection of anthrax in two pieces of mail at military mailrooms. Hundreds of workers were offered antibiotics as a precaution, though no unusual health problems were reported.

Officials said the mail in question had been irradiated, so any anthrax in them was inert when they triggered alarms at the Pentagon mail facility and another nearby facility that handles military mail.

Environmental testing was being conducted on the two military mail facilities and on a third postal facility in the District of Columbia, which was closed Tuesday because it may have handled the mail that went to the two military mailrooms.

Antibiotics were offered to some 200 workers at the D.C. facility and to workers at the military mailrooms. Hospitals were told to be on the lookout for symptoms like respiratory problems, rashes or flu-like symptoms that could signal exposure to anthrax, which can be used as a biological weapon.

"This is a prudent course of action. I don't think there's cause for alarm or panic or undue worry," said Dr. Gregg Pane, director of the city's Department of Health.

"We've also mobilized our strategic national stockpile so we have enough antibiotics available should the need arise."

At the White House, spokesman Scott McClellan said President Bush was told of the developments. "The initial testing came back positive. There was some additional testing that was done and it was inconclusive," McClellan said. "We're still waiting on more definitive results."

Also on Tuesday, a hazardous materials team was called to a building occupied by the Internal Revenue Service after a report of a powdery substance found in a letter. IRS officials said in a statement later that "initial tests were negative for chemical or biological substances."

At the Pentagon, officials on Tuesday corrected inaccurate information about when mailroom sensors were triggered over the possible presence of anthrax.

Spokesman Glenn Flood said the mail that tested positive for anthrax passed

through the Pentagon's mail handling facility on Thursday, not Monday, as he previously said. The test results on the mail did not come back until Monday.

Anthrax was confirmed in two items of mail at the two military mail facilities. The Pentagon's mail delivery site, which is separate from the main Pentagon building, was evacuated and shut down Monday. It remained closed, along with a nearby satellite facility in Fairfax County, Va.

Officials disclosed no information about the origins of the two pieces of mail.

Follow-up tests were being conducted at the U.S. Army Research Institute for Infectious Diseases at Fort Detrick, Md., officials said. They would take two to three days to complete.

Anthrax can be spread through the air or by skin contact.

Officials noted that sometimes anthrax sensors can give false-positive results.

In October 2001, someone sent anthrax in letters through the mail to media and government offices in Washington, Florida and elsewhere, raising fears of bioterrorism.

Five people died and 17 more were sickened. Those cases have never been solved.

\$371,300 bid for alleged 9/11 Pentagon flag

Owner auctioned flag online to raise money for cancer treatment

The Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. — An American flag said to have been hanging from a construction crane at the Pentagon during the Sept. 11 terrorist attack received a final bid of \$371,300 on eBay Monday, but the cancer patient auctioning it said it could have brought more money.

David Nicholson, 44, of Orange, Va., auctioned the flag to raise money for highly specialized treatment for his kidney cancer. But he said the construction company that gave him the flag questioned its authenticity during the 10-day online auction, bringing down its final price.

"With this cancer, I don't need nothing else right now,"

Nicholson said Monday evening, referring to Maryland-based Fascina Construction Co.'s claims it did not have a crane at the Pentagon on Sept. 11.

As part of the auction, Nicholson was giving a letter of authenticity signed by a site supervisor with Fascina Construction.

During the auction, an attorney for Fascina sent a letter to eBay stating that it did not have a crane on site Sept. 11, it did not issue a certificate of authenticity and did not authorize any certificate.

The auction was allowed to continue after Nicholson faxed eBay a copy of the letter.

Nicholson said he believes

Fascina is doing some damage control after losing track of the flag.

"They got a lot of heat and to save face, that's what they did," Nicholson said.

Shawn Peachner, who coordinated Nicholson's auction, said the company was covering up "for essentially throwing away this piece of history."

A call to Fascina's attorney was not returned.

Nicholson said he hoped the high bidder, Todd Schimmel, of Mound, Minn., would go through with the purchase.

In May 2002, Nicholson owned an auction house in Orange where he found the flag

tucked away among several boxes of debris from a Pentagon site under construction when the terrorist attack occurred. The flag was featured on several major news networks.

He received offers from around the world to buy the flag, including one of more than \$100,000, but instead framed it and loaned it to several colleges, schools, fire departments and museums around the country.

When he learned he had an aggressive form of kidney cancer, Nicholson decided to sell the flag to defray medical costs.

"I've got to do what I've got to do," Nicholson said. "Maybe that's why I found the flag."

IN THE STATES

WorldCom's Ebbers convicted on all counts

BY ERIN MCCLAM
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Bernard Ebbers, who built WorldCom from a humble Mississippi long-distance firm into a telecommunications titan, was convicted Tuesday of engineering the colossal accounting fraud that sank the company.

A federal jury in Manhattan deliberated eight days before returning guilty verdicts on one count of conspiracy, one count of securities fraud and seven counts of false regulatory filings — crimes carrying up to 85 years in prison.

When the verdict was read, Ebbers' face reddened. His wife, Christie, and other family members broke into tears.

Sentencing was set for June 13.

The conviction comes more than two years after an internal auditor began ask-

ing questions about curious accounting at WorldCom, touching off a scandal that eventually unearthed \$11 billion in cooked books.

Prosecution testimony at the six-week trial portrayed Ebbers, 63, as obsessed with keeping WorldCom's stock price high, and panicked about \$400 million in personal loans that were backed by his shares in the company.

Ebbers himself took the witness stand late in the trial, insisting that he was unfamiliar with the details of accounting and knew nothing about the fraud taking place



Ebbers

on his watch.

The star witness against him was Scott Sullivan, the former finance chief, who claimed Ebbers repeatedly ordered him to "hit our numbers" — a command, Sullivan said, to falsify the books to meet Wall Street expectations.

Sullivan, who himself has pleaded guilty to fraud, admitted to essentially masterminding the fraud — but said he did it on the clear instructions of Ebbers, who ignored his repeated pleas that the adjustments were wrong.

With the entire telecom industry suffering a dot-com hangover, the fraud was driven by soaring "line costs" — the fees WorldCom paid to smaller local telephone carriers to use their networks.

Prosecutors said the fraud stretched from late 2000 until early 2002, sometimes amounting to nearly \$1 billion per quarter

in hidden expenses and improperly recognized revenue.

Pressure from the loans, the money he stood to lose and the power of the CEO's job combined to form a "perfect storm of corruption" that drove Ebbers to commit fraud, prosecutor William Johnson said in his closing argument.

"He was WorldCom, and WorldCom was Ebbers," the prosecutor told jurors. "He built the company. He ran it. Of course he directed this fraud."

Ebbers gobbled by taking the witness stand. He directly disputed the testimony of Sullivan, saying he became aware of the fraud only in the summer of 2002, after he was asked to leave WorldCom.

"He's never told me he made an entry that wasn't right," Ebbers said of Sullivan. "If he had, we wouldn't be here today."



Supporters of gay marriage march down Market Street in San Francisco on Monday.

Gay marriage ruling foreshadows constitutional fight in California

BY LISA LEFF
The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — A judge has opened the way for California, the most populous U.S. state, to follow Massachusetts in allowing same-sex couples to tie the knot, but both sides in the debate predicted a vigorous court fight first.

San Francisco County Superior Court Judge Richard Kramer ruled Monday that while withholding marriage licenses from gays and lesbians has been the status quo, it constitutes discrimination the state can no longer justify.

"The state's protracted denial of equal protection cannot be justified simply because such constitutional violation has become tra-

ditional," Kramer wrote. "Simply put, same-sex marriage cannot be prohibited solely because California has always done so before."

Ushering out a social norm long considered sacred won't happen right away, however. Kramer's decision is stayed automatically for 60 days to allow time for appeals, and conservative groups that oppose same-sex marriages vowed to uphold California's one woman-one man marriage laws.

"For a single judge to rule there is no conceivable purpose for preserving marriage as one man and one woman is mind-boggling," said Liberty Counsel President Matthew Staver, whose group represents the Campaign for California Families, one of two organizations that joined the

state's attorney general's office in defending California's existing laws.

"This decision will be gasoline on the fire of the pro-marriage movement in California as well as the rest of the country," Staver said.

Supporters of same-sex marriage said they are prepared for a lengthy appeal process but described Kramer's ruling as an unqualified victory. They compared it to the 1948 state Supreme Court decision that made California the first state to legalize interracial marriage.

"Today's ruling is an important step toward a more fair and just California that rejects discrimination and affirms family values for all California families," San Francisco City Attorney Dennis Herrera said.

kies shackled, appeared before Cobb County Magistrate Judge Frank Cox on the same rape charge that he was on trial for Friday when he escaped from another courthouse.

Nichols spoke only once at the hearing, when Cox asked him if he had any questions.

"Not at this time," he said.

Officers lined the walls of the room during Tuesday's hearing.

Authorities said Nichols had been alone with a female deputy Friday when he stole her gun and then shot to death the judge presiding over his rape case and two others.

He also is accused of killing a federal agent as he eluded police.

Security cameras had been rolling Friday morning as Nichols — a former college linebacker who had been found in court earlier in

Michael Jackson's accuser finishes up his testimony

Teen attempts to explain denying abuse

BY TIM MOLLOY
The Associated Press

SANTA MARIA, Calif. — Michael Jackson's accuser testified Tuesday that he told a school administrator the singer didn't molest him because schoolmates were "making fun of me" and he wanted them to stop.

The 15-year-old boy offered the testimony under questioning by District Attorney Tom Sneddon after Jackson attorney Thomas Mesereau Jr. concluded his lengthy cross-examination of the witness.

It was revealed during the cross-examination Monday that the boy had told Jeffrey Alpert, a dean at John Burroughs Middle School in Los Angeles, that nothing had happened to him during stays at Jackson's Neverland ranch.

The conversation was prompted by a TV documentary that showed Jackson with the boy and in which Jackson acknowledged sharing his bed with children, although he characterized the encounters as innocent and non-sexual.

The boy testified that when he returned from his last stay at Neverland in March 2003, schoolmates made fun of him, saying he had been "raped" by Jackson.

He said he got in several fights as a result and had to talk to Alpert, who asked him if he had been molested.

"I told him that it didn't happen," the boy said. "All the kids were already making fun of me at the school and I didn't want anyone to think it had really happened."

He also said he once got in a fight for refusing to join a gang.

On Monday, Mesereau questioned the boy about a history of disciplinary problems as he sought to show that the boy talked back to teachers, disrupted classes and fought with other students.

Before the boy left the stand, Sneddon asked him what he thinks of Jackson now.

"I don't really like him anymore," the boy said. "I don't really think he's deserving of the respect I was giving him as the coolest guy in the world."

"I don't understand why they didn't have the MARTA stand out," said Marianne Fry, a neighbor of slain immigration agent David Wilhelm. "I really wish they had."

During the five-minute hearing, Nichols looked straight ahead and did not make eye contact with anyone in the room, including the judge when he spoke to him.

Atlanta courthouse shooting suspect appears before magistrate

BY BILL POOVEY
The Associated Press

ATLANTA — Surrounded by 19 officers in a cinder-block jail room, the suspect in a rampage that left a judge and three others dead went before a magistrate Tuesday and was informed that authorities plan to charge him with murder.

Brian Nichols, his hands and an-

Government minorities scrutinized

States not tapping enough for top-ranking roles, new study finds

BY MATT SMITH
The Associated Press

ALBANY, N.Y. — Blacks and Hispanics have no trouble getting tapped to lead civil rights commissions, but the same can't be said when it comes to other top-ranking state government jobs nationwide, a new study shows.

"I don't know if I would call it tokenism as I would call occupational segregation," said report author Judith Saidel, director of the Center for Women in Government & Civil Society at the State University of New York at Albany.

Titled "Democracy Unrealized," the study notes the 2000 U.S. Census showed minorities made up 32 percent of the nation's population, but just 16 percent held key appointed policy positions in state governments in 2004.

"There's a number of possible reasons at play here," Saidel said. "We are in a post-affirmative action period. In general, there's a climate less supportive of proactive efforts to identify people of color for various positions."

Michael King, an Atlanta resident and member of the national conservative black group Project 21, said the report, out last month, seemed like it was "engineered to justify an argument."

He noted that with battles ongoing over affirmative action in California, Michigan and Georgia, there is "no logical way you can call this a post-affirmative action period."

King also disputed the suggestion that any advancement by minorities has stopped. "When you look at the number of individuals across the nation both in elective

and appointed office, the numbers are certainly increasing," he said.

The report looked only at states where minority groups totaled five percent or more of the population. Leadership jobs referred specifically to agency commissioner or gubernatorial adviser.

While blacks made up 12 percent of the U.S. population in 2000, they held 10 percent of the state government policy-leader posts last year.

Blacks held an equitable share of leadership jobs in 11 of 29 states surveyed. Those states include: Indiana, Massachusetts, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia and Wisconsin.

In New York, 4.8 percent of leadership jobs were held by blacks, despite the fact they made

up nearly 16 percent of the state's population — the percentage is the lowest in the nation.

The highest percentage is in Wisconsin, where nearly 19 percent of leadership posts are held by blacks in a state where blacks accounted for 5.7 percent of the population in 2000.

Asian Americans and American Indians, who made up a combined 5 percent of the population in the 2000 Census, held just 2 percent of the top posts in 2004, the report said, a finding Saidel called "most dismal."

Hispanics, meanwhile, held the lowest share of executive positions at four percent, despite making up 13 percent of the nation's population. The nationwide numbers of Hispanic and black women appointees between 1998-2004 increased from 12 to 28 and 47 to 70, respectively, according to the report.

Reporter: Excessive secrecy ineffective

BY LAURIE KELLMAN
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The more information the government tries to keep secret, the greater the chance that what should be kept secret will be leaked to reporters, according to a retired Associated Press newsman and executive.

"Overdone secrecy raises, rather than reduces, the risk that really vital secrets will be breached," Walter Mears, former AP executive editor and vice president, said in prepared testimony for a Senate hearing Tuesday. "Without some procedures for withholding information, things that shouldn't get out will get out."

Mears, a Pulitzer Prize-winning political reporter, was among five witnesses appearing before the Senate Judiciary terrorism, technology and homeland security subcommittee. The panel is looking at legislation designed in part to force government officials and agencies to respond more quickly to requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act.

After the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, the Bush administration set a higher threshold for FOIA disclosures, advising agencies to make sure the information they released would not jeopardize national security.

"Too often, security becomes an excuse for shielding embarrassing information and secrecy can conceal mismanagement or wrongdoing," Mears said, recalling former President Nixon's effort to use national security as an excuse for the Watergate coverup.

"Forgetting history risks repeating it."

A bill by Sens. John Cornyn, R-Texas, and Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., would require agencies to give people seeking documents a tracking number within 10 days and to set up telephone or Internet systems allowing them to learn the status and estimated completion date.

Agencies that didn't respond within 20 days would lose all exemptions to FOIA requests except for national security, personnel information, proprietary information or a ban in another law.

Spelling bees find place in American pop culture

BY BROOKE DONALD
The Associated Press

LINCOLN, R.I. — When school district officials canceled their annual spelling bee, controversy was an eight letter word for controversy — b-o-o-u-a-a-h-a.

Suddenly, local newspapers started receiving letters urging a reversal of the decision. Talk radio picked up the story, and school and community leaders got phone calls and e-mails.

"I was surprised by all the attention," said new schools superintendent John Tindall Gibson, who soon reinstated the bee.

But national educators and spelling bee coordinators weren't.

They said the mini-outcry was another example of the popularity of bees, which have expanded substantially over the past decade and have been celebrated in film, television, books and theater.

"They're like apple pie in America," said Paige Kimble, director of the Scripps National Spelling Bee, the nation's largest and most prestigious bee. "Bees are just part of the school experience."

The Lincoln School District dropped the bee initially because of concerns that it was damaging to children who lost and it did not meet the goals of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Parents argued that the bee taught good study habits and provided students who might not excel in sports or theater a place to shine in front of their peers.

"Spelling bees can boost self-esteem and help students reach high standards," said Ed Walsh, deputy press secretary at the U.S. Department of Education. "We want schools to incorporate as many ways to teach students."

The 78th annual National Spelling Bee, which will take place in Washington, D.C., from May 31 to June 2, will have more participants than ever. At least 271 children from all 50 states and several other countries are expected to attend.

Kimble said that since the 1980s, participation has more than doubled in the national bee. "It makes me feel proud," said Adelaide Arias, 13, of Providence. Arias, who speaks Spanish at home, represented Springfield Middle School in the Rhode Island statewide spelling bee this month. "Even if you don't win, you've learned a lot."

The English language, with its complex word construction and bendable rules, makes spelling particularly difficult, Kimble said. "All it takes is one letter and you're out," she said. "There's nothing like it in sport."

That drama was a big reason why ESPN began to air the national competition live in 1994. Kimble credits the sports network's decision to boosting the bee's popularity.

"It got the ball rolling," Kimble said. ESPN spokesman Mac Nvulu said the appeal of bees is obvious: competition.

"It was reality television before you really saw reality television," he said. "These kids come from all walks of life, and they have great spirit."

For example, Nvulu asked, who can forget 13-year-old Rebecca Sealfon of New York City exuberantly spelling the word that earned her a National Spelling Bee victory in 1997? The home-schooled girl screamed each vowel and consonant in the word "eunonym," then pumped her fists in the air and screamed again.

"It's your best, unscribed moments," Nvulu said.



Rebecca Sealfon, 13, of Brooklyn, N.Y., reacts after winning the 1997 National Spelling Bee in Washington, D.C. The cancellation of a local spelling bee in Rhode Island drew a slew of protests and highlights the increasing popularity of the contests in the States.



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AP photos

Above: Chrissie Hynde was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as a member of The Pretenders on Monday in New York. Right: Bono and The Edge, as well as Adam Clayton and Larry Mullen Jr., were inducted as members of U2.



'The cream of the cake'

It's a beautiful day for U2, Buddy Guy and others as rock's hall of fame welcomes newest members

BY NEKESA MUMBI MOODY
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Minutes after U2 was officially bumped up to legendary status after a raucous, sentimental induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, the Irish quartet headed to the media room to answer questions about their momentous honor.

But perhaps only a rock band fronted by Bono would first be asked about everything but music.

"Bono... What about the Nobel Peace Prize?" one reporter called out, querying as to whether Bono's mission to eradicate third-world debt would get him the honor.

"Rock star is already having the cream of the cake," Bono replied.

Over U2's 30-year journey from the streets of Dublin to becoming one of the world's most important rock bands, there have often been times when Bono's charisma, his charitable and business efforts have eclipsed his collaborators and lifelong friends. U2's other members, guitarist The Edge, bassist Adam Clayton and drummer Larry Mullen Jr.

But on Monday evening, if not always clear to others, their rock peers recognized the collaborative achievements of perhaps the most groundbreaking rock group in the past two decades.

"Ono, dos, tres, catorce," said Bruce Springsteen, quoting the Spanish countdown in U2's recent hit "Vertigo," as he inducted the band into the hall of fame with a loving, humorous tribute.

"The translation is one, two, three, fourteen. That is the correct math for rock 'n' roll. The whole had

better equal a lot more than the sum of its parts — or else you're just rubbing two sticks together."

On a night when The Pretenders, The O'Jays, Percy Sledge and blues legend Buddy Guy received key to rock's exclusive club, U2 was clearly the evening's star attraction.

But they were hardly the evening's only highlight. The O'Jays are best known for their work with Philly soul producers Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff. "Back Stabbers" was a big hit in 1972, with "Love Train" and "For the Love of Money" other well-known songs.

The Pretenders came from the same rock generation as U2. Ohio native Chrissie Hynde was a tough but tender role model for women, singing "Brass in Pocket," "Precious" and "Back on the Chain Gang." "They went through all the heartache that rock 'n' roll is built on — they lost two band members and they never gave up," said Neil Young, who inducted the band and sat in for a ferocious performance of "My City Was Gone."

Guy dominated the Chicago blues guitar scene, and he was ushered into the hall by some pretty decent guitar players themselves — Eric Clapton and B.B. King. Later, both joined Guy onstage for a rousing rendition of "Let Me Love You Baby."

Frank Barsalona, credited with creating the first big rock 'n' roll booking agency, and Sire Records founder Seymour Stein were inducted in the nonperformer category.

Musicians, industry professionals and journalists vote on the inductees. Hall of fame members are permanently enshrined in Cleveland's Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.



Legendary blues performer Buddy Guy, center, stands with B.B. King and Eric Clapton after performing during the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony. Backstage, Guy noted that few black blues musicians have been able to enjoy the success he has had in their lifetimes. "My mother told me before she died... if you've got any flowers, give 'em to me now, so I can smell 'em. So I'll give this to me tonight, I can smell this, man!"

Clinton heads home after minor surgery

BY DINO HAZELL
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Former President Clinton left the hospital after minor surgery, saying he was "very grateful" to his medical team and "deeply" appreciated the thousands of get-well messages sent to him.

"I'm glad to be home and look forward to getting back to work within the next month or so," Clinton said in a statement issued Monday by his spokesman, Jim Kennedy.

The 42nd president's recovery was proceeding normally, and he has begun walking each day, Kennedy said. He is expected to remain at home in Chappaqua, about 40 miles north of Manhattan, for the next four to six weeks. Clinton underwent surgery last week to remove scar tissue and fluid around his left lung. His medical problem developed after his heart bypass surgery six months ago.

Doctors described the operation as a low-risk procedure to relieve a problem that crops up in only a fraction of 1 percent of bypass cases. They said the combination of fluid and scar tissue had reduced Clinton's left lung capacity by 25 percent.

Surgeons removed a rind of scar tissue nearly a third of an inch thick in some places. The doctors had said Clinton would be hospitalized for three to 10 days; he was released after four.

Nearly 10,000 people have sent get-well messages to Clinton through his foundation's Web site. "Get well soon so you can be up and around to continue your wonderful contributions to this world!" said one.

Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton accompanied her husband to their upstate home. A motorcade of SUVs was seen leaving New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia University Medical Center shortly after 5 p.m.

FCC: ABC's football stunt wasn't indecent

BY JUGE SHIVER JR.
Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON — Indecency critics were thrown for a loss by federal regulators Monday over their complaints about ABC's race "Monday Night Football" skit in November featuring actress Nicolete Sheridan and football star Terrell Owens.

The Federal Communications Commission concluded "the episode is not sufficiently explicit or graphic to be deemed indecent."

The segment, aired before the Philadelphia Eagles-Dallas Cowboys game, began with Eagles wide receiver Owens in a locker room with "Desperate Housewives" star Sheridan dressed in only a towel.

Sheridan coyly asked Owens to skip the upcoming game. When he declined, she dropped the towel and was shown from the waist up for the rest of the broadcast.

Monday's ruling was the fifth

time in two weeks that the FCC received viewer complaints of televised indecency.

On Feb. 28, the FCC ruled that ABC's telecast of Steven Spielberg's acclaimed World War II movie, "Saving Private Ryan," did not violate government indecency standards even though the film contained graphic violence and profanity. The FCC also dismissed complaints against NBC's "Will and Grace," Fox's "Arrested Development" and WB's "Angel" drama.

The Traditional Values Coalition in Anaheim, Calif., was among the groups filing a complaint. The coalition declined to comment.

Other groups that criticized the "Monday Night Football" skit said it was just the latest example of the TV industry pushing too far in lacing shows with sex, violence and graphic language. They said Monday's ruling that they were not surprised by the FCC action.

Kweisi Mfume announces run for Md. Senate seat

BALTIMORE — Maryland's U.S. Senate race still is 10 months away. But the race is on.

On Monday, three days after Sen. Paul Sarbanes announced he won't seek a sixth term, former NAACP president Kweisi Mfume launched a bid to take over the NAACP.

"I don't want to play games and say I'm going to put a team together to look at this," Mfume said at a news conference. "I hope this early statement says to people I'm very serious about this. I'm in this for the long haul."

If elected, Mfume would become the first black U.S. senator in Maryland history and only the sixth in U.S. history.

Mfume, a former five-term U.S. congressman who stepped down to become president of the NAACP, is the first in a potentially crowded field of Democratic candidates to step forward and officially declare his intentions.

The 56-year-old Baltimore native and former radio talk show host waited for all Sarbanes to decide whether to stay or go. Sarbanes, 72, is the longest-serving senator in state history.

From The Associated Press



Mfume

IN THE WORLD

Bodyguards of Kosovo's president stand beside the damaged vehicle carrying President Ibrahim Rugova after a failed assassination attempt in Kosovo's capital, Pristina, on Tuesday.

AP



Kosovo's president survives bomb blast

BY FISNIK ABRASHI

The Associated Press

PRISTINA, Serbia-Montenegro — Kosovo President Ibrahim Rugova survived an apparent assassination attempt Tuesday after a bomb exploded as his convoy passed through central Pristina.

At least one person was injured by flying glass, police spokeswoman Sabrije Kamberi said. Rugova, who was apparently unhurt, had been heading to a nearby government building for a meeting with the European Union's foreign policy chief, Javier Solana, when the explosion occurred. No one has claimed responsibility.

Rugova's car was damaged, and the president was seen being transferred to another car and being driven away after the explosion.

"Thank God I survived again," Rugova said, appearing calm before his meeting with Solana. "Unfortunately, there are still elements which want to destabilize Kosovo."

Last year, a hand grenade was hurled at Rugova's residence from a passing vehicle. The grenade exploded in the garden without causing any injuries, and no one was ever arrested in connection with the attack.

A police officer at the scene of Tuesday's explosion said in court of anonymity that the blast appeared to have been caused by a remote-controlled explosive device.

The windows of nearby shops were shattered and a small metal garbage bin at the roadside, in which the bomb apparently had been placed, was shredded by the blast. Shards of glass were scattered in the street. Police sealed off the site.

NATO-led peacekeepers used a robot to sift through other garbage bins, checking for more possible bombs.

Last Friday, a small explosion possibly caused by a hand grenade occurred near the United Nations' headquarters in Kosovo, injuring one person.

The top U.N. official in the province, Soren Jessen-Petersen, "strongly condemned the explosive attack against President Rugova's convoy."

The attack on Rugova is "an unacceptable act of terrorism," said Terry Davis, chairman of the Council of Europe, the continent's top human rights watchdog.

The ethnic Albanian Rugova, a pacifist leader, was elected Kosovo's president in 2002 and re-elected last December.

Ringleader of U.S. Embassy bombing plot gets 10 years

BY PIERRE-ANTOINE SOUCHARD

The Associated Press

PARIS — A French court on Tuesday gave the maximum 10-year prison sentence to the ringleader of an alleged plot to send a suicide bomber into the U.S. Embassy in Paris. The court also sentenced five other defendants in the case to prison terms of between one and nine years.

The group's ringleader, Djamel Beghal, 39, and the others were convicted of "criminal association in relation with a terrorist enterprise," a broad accusation commonly used in terrorism cases in France that allowed for a maximum 10-year sentence.

The defendants all denied any connection to a terrorist plot, and Beghal testified that his confession of a plan to send a suicide bomber into the U.S. Embassy was obtained under torture after his July 2001 arrest in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. He was extradited to France two months later and retracted that confession.

Lawyers for Beghal and Lamel Daoudi, the other leading defendant, said they would file appeals.

The investigation opened Sept. 10, 2001 — a day before the al-Qaida terror attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

No solid evidence of a plot was presented at the trial, leaving the three judges to untangle a trail of phone calls, meetings with suspect acquaintances and trips.

Beghal's lawyer, Jean-Alain Michel, denounced the trial as a "judiciary parody," adding: "Proof, we

have none. There are no documents, no conversation."

Prosecutors claimed the plot was concocted in Afghanistan with leading al-Qaida lieutenant Abu Zubaydah, who was captured in March 2002. At his trial, Beghal denied ever meeting the Saudi-born Palestinian, said to be a link between Osama bin Laden and many of al-Qaida's operational cells.

In Dubai, Beghal supposedly told Dubai authorities of a plot to target U.S. interests in France and identified a Tunisian accomplice, former professional soccer player Nizar Trabelsi, who was to enter the U.S. Embassy wearing a bomb belt.

Beghal said the confession was extracted through torture that he claimed included inserting instruments such as knitting needles into his genitals.

Trabelsi was convicted in Belgium in September 2003 after admitting to plans to drive a car bomb into a Belgian air base where U.S. nuclear weapons are believed stored.

Daoudi, 30, received nine years in prison. A computer expert who also trained in Afghanistan, Daoudi was arrested in Britain, where he fled ahead of a police sweep in France.

Nabil Bounour, and Abdelkrim Lefkir, both 34, were given six-year prison terms. Bounour, of Algerian origin, was also forbidden to return to France once his sentence was served. Lefkir had his civil rights suspended for 10 years.

Rachid Benmessaoud received a three-year prison term, while Johan Bonte, Beghal's brother-in-law, was sentenced to a year behind bars.

G5 nations agree to share terror info

BY CIARAN GILES

The Associated Press

GRANADA, Spain — Interior ministers from five major European powers agreed Tuesday on ways to speed the exchange of information on terror suspects, monitor the Internet's use by terrorists and criminals and tip each other off when weapons or explosives are stolen.

At the sixth meeting of the informal group set up in 2003, ministers from Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Spain also agreed to increase cooperation in the exchange of data on fingerprints, DNA, criminal records, missing people, unidentified bodies and stolen vehicles.

"The objective is to make sure that the police forces of the Group of Five countries should have immediate access to the information that they need and which other members possess," the ministers said in a statement wrapping up their two-day meeting.

Spanish minister Jose Antonio



AP

British Home Secretary Charles Clarke, center, speaks Tuesday with Giuseppe Pisanu of Italy in Granada, Spain, where G5 interior ministers agreed to set up a network of contact groups to exchange information on international terrorism.

Alonso said, "No country will be able to refuse to give another one any information required."

Alonso said the exchange of information on terror suspects concerned "people for which you have a rational suspicion that

they were involved in terrorist activities, people who have been trained in al-Qaida camps and people who need to be watched very carefully."

"We need to know who those people are," he said.

Belfast sisters confront IRA

DUBLIN, Ireland — Five Catholic sisters from Belfast departed Tuesday for the United States — to give President Bush a dossier identifying the Irish Republican Army men who killed their brother.

They demand justice for their brother Robert McCartney, 33, who was beaten with iron rods and whose throat and stomach were slashed with a knife outside a Belfast pub Jan. 30.

The sisters say more than 70 potential witnesses of the pub fight involving local IRA figures are too afraid to identify anybody responsible to police.

Palestinian security to get Jericho

JERUSALEM — Israel is to hand the West Bank town of Jericho to Palestinian security control Wednesday and another town a few days later, boosting cooperation as the Palestinian leader flew to Cairo to oversee the signing of a formal truce between militants and Israel.

Agreements on a handover have been reached before in principle, but disputes over Israeli roadblocks and territory to be transferred prevented implementation. The Palestinians agreed Israel could keep one roadblock for another month.

From wire reports

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March 16, 2005



OPINION

In an era of the superpower, we're all safer

BY ARTHUR HERMAN

Terrorists swarm into Iraq, North Korea plays nuclear blackmail, Syria and Iran hold hands in public; crowds fill Beirut's streets; the shooting of an Italian journalist provokes outrage across Europe. Is this a world being made safe for democracy or a world on the brink? Some, especially Europeans, say the latter, arguing that this is what happens when the planet is stuck with just one superpower. Echoing France's Jacques Chirac, they yearn for a more "multipolar world," where an all-powerful United States can't play the bully.

Nonsense. The fact is, a unipolar world is a safer world and has been historically. For more than 100 years, from the defeat of Napoleon to the start of World War I, Britain was the world's lone superpower. Its Royal Navy enabled it to do the heavy lifting across the globe that no other nation could do would, just as the U.S. military does today. Despite an inevitable crisis or two, the world enjoyed unprecedented peace, prosperity and stability. Now, with so many worried about the United States dominating the world, it's worth passing along the lessons Britain learned in its years as lone superpower.

Be prepared to make enemies. "How glorious is the title of

"Englishman," wrote a Victorian-era Royal Navy officer after the mere presence of his ship off the coast of Italy ended riots in Rome and other cities, "and yet we are not loved." Don't expect to be. The world's other powers will never be happy about the global order you impose. Few will dare to challenge you overtly, but they will scheme behind your back.

For decades after Napoleon's defeat, Britain fought to tug the world in a new, progressive direction. Britain's support of national self-determination in South America and southern Europe often put it at odds with Spain and Russia. France, which Britain had saved from dismemberment at the Vienna peace congress in 1815, plotted to reverse Britain's naval supremacy. Yet that supremacy protected France's business interests around the world. It also preserved a balance of power in Europe, which allowed France to remain a great power until World War I. As Iraq shows, in power politics no good deed goes unpunished.

Be prepared for the long haul. Britain's first step in creating a new world order in 1815 was declaring war on the Atlantic slave trade — akin to today's war on terror. It put together a coalition of the brave and coerced to get a final treaty (Spain and Portugal re-

fused to sign unless they were paid off). Nations that still had slaves dragged their feet, especially the United States. For more than 40 years, the Royal Navy fought to plug the outflow of slaves from Africa amid daunting obstacles. Successive British governments persisted out of a sense of moral duty.

This arduous effort, which many dismissed as a failure for decades, finally paid off, and by 1870 one of the worst scourges of European domination of the planet had come to an end. In world leadership, persistence pays.

Your best ambassador is your military. For more than a century, the Royal Navy was not only the instrument of the Pax Britannica but a reassuring symbol. Wherever its ships anchored, travelers, merchants and journalists of every nation felt safe. Royal navies became the modern equivalent of knights in shining armor.

Today, the men and women of the U.S. armed services fill the same role. Look at their essential role in providing relief to tsunami victims (just the kind of job the Royal Navy did for a century) in full view of the Muslim world. Isolated incidents such as Abu Ghraib do not change the fact that U.S. troops make up the best military in the history. Let the world see the face of the Pax Americana, in



Supporters of Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal, Pakistan's six-party religious alliance, chant slogans against America during a rally last week in Islamabad. Thousands gathered to condemn President Gen. Pervez Musharraf's government and his association with the United States.

peace-time and in wartime.

Finally, watch your back. Expect challengers to arise, those who will envy your power and look for opportunities to overtake you.

After World War I, British politicians tried to save money by slashing the size of the fleet. It was the crucial mistake of the 20th century. In the power vacuum Britain left in the Pacific, in slipped imperial Japan; in the Mediterranean, in slipped Mussolini's Italy; in Western and Central Europe, Hitler's Third Reich. It would take Pearl

Harbor to awaken the giant that would eventually take Britain's place as the world's policeman, the United States.

The only thing worse than a world with a lone superpower is one without a lone superpower. Despite its protestations, the world knows that — and that in a crisis, it's the Americans, and only the Americans, who will save the day.

Arthur Herman is the author, most recently, of "To Rule the Waves: How the British Navy Shaped the Modern World." This column first appeared in the Los Angeles Times.

Iceland comes to idea of diminished use of its language

BY WILLIAM ECKENBERGER

I hand the agent my *brottfarspjal*, step on board Icelandic Flight 642. Just before takeoff, the flight attendant stands before us clapping a seat-belt buckle and drowning through the *orgjafundur* air hord. Some five hours later, we begin our descent into Reykjavik. At the airport, I get my passport stamped at *vagabæturflirt*, a quick refresher stop in the *snyrtirg*, exchange dollars for kronas at the *guldreyri* and pick up tourist information at the *upplýsingagjafustofu fyrir ferðafolk*.

I have come to this nation of 280,000 inhabitants, who speak to each other in a language that is incomprehensible to 19,999 of every 20,000 people on Earth, to see how they are holding up against the onslaught of English. Iceland's linguistic patriots go to incredible lengths to preserve their language. Foreign words are ruthlessly screened out by a special agency, which also invents words for new things and ideas.

Icelanders have a strong belief in their own national greatness, and that conviction is rooted unshakably in language and words. Literacy isn't a problem here; it's a given. Icelanders believe that men and women should turn a verse as easily as they turn a profit, and both endeavors are considered important to one's well-being.

Iceland has more bookstores per capita than any other nation in the world ("better shoeless than bookless" is an unofficial national motto). The most important tomes are the sagas. Written in the 12th and 13th centuries, these are the great prose narratives of medieval Iceland, bloodthirsty tales of Viking derring-do. Icelandic schoolchildren read their national literature exactly as it was written hundreds of years ago. Modern Icelanders speak virtually the same language as their forefathers of the 10th century. Tomorrow morning's Reykjavik newspa-

pers will be written in the same language as the ancient sagas — that would be like this newspaper using Chaucerian English.

Language preservation worked nicely for centuries because Icelanders lived in a remote area apart from the rest of the world, but in recent decades the cultural floodgates have been opened. English is everywhere — on televisions, VCRs, the Internet and commercial products.

It's part of a global problem: About 400 million people speak English as their first language, an additional 700 million or so use it as a second language and a billion people more are struggling to learn how to speak it. Meanwhile, other languages are disappearing at the rate of two per month. There are about 6,800 languages in the world, but the expert consensus is that 400 of them will soon be extinct.

Why care? "When you lose a language," the late linguistics professor Kenneth Hale once said, "you lose a culture, intellectual

wealth, a work of art. It's like dropping a bomb on a museum."

The front line of Iceland's preservation battle is in Reykjavik, the home of the Icelandic Language Institute (*Iðensk Málstöð*). This government agency was set up in 1964 to devise new words when existing language proves inadequate. When AIDS first came to national attention in Iceland, the main discussion was what to call it rather than how to prevent it. The institute does not believe that AIDS should be called AIDS, and this disease is officially known as *aldnaemi*, an ancient Icelandic word meaning "totally vulnerable," which the institute settled on after some three years of study.

The preservationists often resurrect words from the sagas. A computer is called *tölva*, a fusion of the old Icelandic words for number and prophetic, and a TV screen is a *skjár*, a sheep's placenta once used by farmers as window panes. My favorite is *fröþjófur*, the word for pager, which means "thief of peace."

I left Iceland pessimistic. Everywhere I went, I heard English spoken. Though a written language can be purged of foreign words and phrases, policing how people speak is another matter. Many young Icelanders can't be bothered with a language that is a minefield of subjunctive, inflections and gender (the number 2 has three genders).

In one sense, the Icelanders have no one to blame but themselves. Just as they have earnestly defended their language, they have with equal enthusiasm made sure that every schoolchild has a computer and learns English. Thus Microsoft sees no need to translate Windows into Icelandic. The publishers of popular books are beginning to publish translations as well. It's what the Icelandic language purists call a *síðelding* — a Catch-22. I fear the handwriting is on the wall — and it's in English.

William Eckenberger was a longtime reporter at The Philadelphia Inquirer. This column first appeared in the Los Angeles Times.

Mallard Fillmore

BY BRUCE TINSLEY



Tabletop 3-16

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At least 28 dead in Philippine prison uprising

Nation braces for retaliation after Abu Sayyaf terrorists are killed

BY OLIVER TEVES
The Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines braced for retaliatory attacks after some of the country's most hardened terror suspects were killed in a failed prison uprising that left 28 people dead, but most of them inmates killed in a barrage of bullets as hundreds of police stormed the maximum security facility.

The dead included three leaders and a fourth member of the al-Qaida-linked Abu Sayyaf, a group notorious for deadly attacks and ransom kidnappings in which hostages have been beheaded.

The crisis began with an Abu Sayyaf suspect snatching a guard's weapon and quickly turned into a prolonged standoff with at least 10 of the group's top suspects leading the rebellious inmates.

Three guards and 24 inmates died — 22 in Tuesday's assault to take back the prison. A police officer also was killed, his

body discovered under debris hours after the operation ended.

Sweat-soaked police marksmen filed out of the building after the assault to the applause of bystanders, escorting prisoners stripped to their underwear and with hands clasped behind their heads.

"The terrorists got what was coming to them," Ignacio Bunye, press secretary for President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, said in a statement. "The crisis team gave them all the chances to peacefully surrender."

The raid began after authorities gave the inmates a 15-minute deadline to surrender — an ultimatum that came after hours of fruitless negotiations. Six officers were wounded in the assault, which saw some detainees scale down walls inside the compound as thick smoke billowed out.

The inmates had agreed to surrender after their failed jailbreak Monday, but the deal broke down when they demanded food, prompting civilian negotiators to leave in frustration.

The bloody assault raised fears of retaliatory attacks. Even as Arroyo congratulated police, an Abu Sayyaf leader warned of repercussions.

"To you people, you don't have to bring the war to Mindanao," Abu Sulaiman told DZBB radio, referring to the Muslim homeland in the south where the military has launched offensives against militants. "We will bring it right into your doorstep."

The inmates had warned of bombings if there was an assault on the jail. No one doubted that the Abu Sayyaf has the means and will power to carry them out.

"Of course that's our concern," national police chief Arturo Lomibao said. "We hope there's going to be no retaliatory strikes from our Muslim brothers because they know what happened here. We tried to resolve it peacefully."

Three leaders were among four Abu Sayyaf members killed. Alhazem Manaz al-Limbon, known as Kosovo; Ghalib And, known as Commander Robot; and Nadzime Sabtullah, alias Commander Global.



Two wounded prisoners, suspected Abu Sayyaf, walk outside Tuesday after police stormed a prison in suburban Taguig, south of Manila. At least 24 inmates, three guards and one police officer were killed.

Two pedestrians walk Sunday in front of a poster with a portrait of a top war crimes suspect Gen. Ante Gotovina, in Kryn, Croatia. If Gotovina is not arrested by Wednesday, the EU has threatened to postpone membership talks with Croatia.



EU membership in trouble for Croatia

BY EUGENE BRICC
The Associated Press

PAKOSTANE, Croatia — Nebogus Perica is halfway through peeling a portrait of a top war crimes suspect from a street pole when a gust of wind tears it free and sends him in a clumsy dash to gather it up.

Efforts to remove signs of support for retired Gen. Ante Gotovina in his southern, coastal hometown have taken on an urgency akin to that of the government's bid to capture him.

If Gotovina is not arrested and surrendered to the U.N. war crimes tribunal by Wednesday, the European Union has threatened it will postpone membership negotiations with Croatia.

"He's like a ghost," says municipal worker Perica, shying away from the lens of a camera as he scrapes the remains of a flier from a street lantern. "I take him down one minute and he's already up again somewhere else."

The government claims that it cannot catch Gotovina as he is not on Croat soil. Police said last week that they have combed the

entire country, checking more than 2000 people, homes and other property without any clues to his whereabouts.

Not everybody is convinced, though.

U.N. Chief Prosecutor Carla Del Ponte, who is reportedly fed by foreign intelligence data, recently claimed that Zagreb was reluctant to track down the former French Legionnaire and that "structures within the government" have helped to shelter him. The impasse has divided Europe into two camps ahead of the decision on whether to open membership talks as planned on Thursday.

A group led by Britain and Scandinavian countries maintains that negotiations should be delayed until Gotovina is caught. The other side, led by Austria and Croatia's neighbors, maintain that talks should start as envisioned as the country has done its utmost to cooperate with the U.N. tribunal and should not be held hostage to a fugitive.

A single veto on Wednesday will be enough to scuttle the planned talks.

Musharraf: Bin Laden almost caught

BY MUNIR AHMAD
The Associated Press

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan — Pakistani security forces came close to capturing Osama bin Laden in an operation about eight to 10 months ago, but the terror mastermind eluded arrest and his trail has since gone cold, Pakistani's president said Tuesday.

Though President Gen. Pervez Musharraf did not say where the operation took place, the commander was the first official to indicate that bin Laden has recently been in Pakistan. Intelligence officials have said they believe he is

hiding in the rugged mountains that straddle the border with Afghanistan.

"There was a time when the dragnet had closed and we thought we knew roughly the area where he possibly could be," Musharraf said.

"That was, I think, some time back ... maybe about eight to 10 months back," he said, adding: "But after that, this is such a game, this intelligence, that they escape. They can move and then you lose contact."

Musharraf and other Pakistani leaders say the silence is a sign they have destroyed al-Qaida's network here.

Pakistan is a key ally of the United States in its war on terror. Its security forces have captured more than 700 terror suspects, including some key al-Qaida operatives.

Bin Laden was last seen in a video released just before the U.S. elections in November. The video was dropped off at the Islamabad office of the Arabic news channel al-Jazeera, though there was no indication from the tape where Osama was when he recorded it.

In the 18-minute videotape, Bin Laden threatened fresh attacks on the United States.

Protesters march on U.S. Embassy in Lebanon

BY BASSEM MROUE
The Associated Press

BEIRUT, Lebanon — About 2,000 pro-Syria demonstrators denouncing what they said was American interference in Lebanon marched toward the U.S. Embassy in a Beirut suburb Tuesday, and scores of riot police and soldiers used barbed wire to block the approaches to the compound.

The protesters, waving Lebanese flags and chanting, "Ambassador get out! Leave my country free!" stopped at the barbed wire blocking the road about 500 yards from the fortified hilltop compound. The crowd did not try to break through.

A day earlier, hundreds of thousands of people gathered in the capital in the largest anti-Syrian protests yet since international pressure on Damascus to withdraw its troops has intensified.

Pro-Syrian groups have blamed the United States for pressuring Syria into deciding to withdraw its 14,000 troops from Lebanon.

They also reject a U.S.-sponsored U.N. Security Council resolution demanding that Syria withdraw and dismantle militias, a reference to the militant Shiite Muslim group Hezbollah.

In Washington, President Bush left open the possibility that the militant Shiite Muslim group Hezbollah could be part of the political mainstream in Lebanon despite its terrorist past.

"We view Hezbollah as a terrorist organization," Bush said after an Oval Office meeting with Jordan's King Abdullah. "I would hope that Hezbollah would prove that they are not by laying down arms and not threatening peace."

Hezbollah has been involved in Lebanese politics



An anti-American demonstrator wears a Lebanese flag around his face while dancing around burning anti-American placards during a protest near the U.S. Embassy in Aukar, Lebanon.

for over a decade, with an extensive social welfare program and nine lawmakers in the current 128-seat parliament. But it has steered away from major decision-making in national politics as its guerrilla army — the most organized and best-armed faction in Lebanon — focused on fighting Israel. Lebanon considers Hezbollah a legitimate resistance movement that led the guerrilla war against Israel's 18-year occupation of southern Lebanon.

Lately, Hezbollah has been flexing its political muscle by organizing two huge pro-Syrian rallies.

Reporter's footage has Bollywood mired in sex scandal

BY RAMOLA TALWAR BADAM
The Associated Press

BOMBAY, India — India's Bollywood film industry was in the grip of a sex scandal Tuesday after a TV station broadcast footage of a famous villain actor purportedly soliciting sex from a journalist posing as an aspiring actress.

Actor Shakti Kapoor has denied any wrongdoing and accused India TV of framing him.

A video clip, which the station said was taken earlier this year, purportedly shows Kapoor in a Bombay hotel room telling the undercover reporter, "I want to make love

to you ... and if you want to come in this line [of business], you have to do what I am telling [you] to do."

Kapoor is heard on the 40-minute recording telling the woman that he will put her through acting and dance classes before introducing her to top producers. He also names three Indian actresses who allegedly had sex with top producers and directors in exchange for roles. The recording sparked an uproar in Bol-

lywood. The Film and TV Producers' Guild said it "is advising its members not to engage Shakti Kapoor in any work."

But some industry leaders appeared inflamed by the scandal.

Producer Mahesh Bhatt said soliciting sex in exchange for roles "is Bollywood's best-known secret."

"The rot is within us," he said, adding that Kapoor should only be punished with a fine.

Kapoor, who usually plays villains in

movies, has claimed the clip was altered. He said the women repeatedly over several months, asking for a film role and finally threatening suicide if he did not come to her hotel room.

"The tapes have been doctored," he told reporters Sunday. "I never touched her."

Kapoor also denied making any allegations against other celebrities or powerful figures in India's film industry. He threatened to sue India TV.

Kapoor has acted in more than 300 movies, including "Jodi No. 1" ("Couple No. 1") and "Phir bhi Dil hai Hindustani" ("The Heart Remains Indian").

Producer Mahesh Bhatt said soliciting sex in exchange for roles "is Bollywood's best-known secret."

Vote may face delay

KABUL, Afghanistan — The head of Afghanistan's election commission said Tuesday that authorities were discussing a proposal to postpone parliamentary elections until September, a step that has long been rumored due to logistical delays in organizing the vote.

"We are discussing a proposal to delay the elections ... to September, but a final decision about it will be taken soon," Bismillah Bismil told a meeting of representatives of the political parties in the capital, Kabul.

Claiming Taj Mahal

LUCKNOW, India — An Islamic charity claims that it owns the Taj Mahal, and it is seeking a portion of the entrance fees charged at the world famous monument to love, an official said Tuesday.

The white-marbled Taj Mahal complex, which was built by Mogul Emperor Shah Jahan for his favorite wife, Mumtaz Mahal, houses their graves and a mosque, as well as several other graves of lesser Mogul royalty.

The Sunni Waqf Board says it owns the site and has asked the Allahabad High Court to rule on its claim, which is based on an Indian government directive saying that all Muslim graveyards belong to the board.

Cocaine prices rising

BOGOTA, Colombia — A top United Nations anti-drug official predicted cocaine prices in the United States and Europe will rise next year, reflecting the fruits of a six-year U.N. effort to eradicate drug production in Colombia.

"Considering Colombia supplies 80 percent of the world cocaine market, we think prices are going to rise starting in 2006," said Sandro Calvani, director of the U.N.'s Office on Drugs and Crime in Colombia, in an interview with The Associated Press on Monday.

Immigrants in Sicily

ROME — Two boats carrying hundreds of illegal immigrants landed on a tiny Sicilian island Tuesday, officials said, bringing to about 1,000 the total number of migrants coming ashore in the last three days.

Italian officials have said many of the boats set off from Libya, and Rome and Tripoli started exploring the possibility last month of creating joint teams to crack down on illegal immigration.

From The Associated Press

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Smoking ban review

RI PROVIDENCE — The Health Department probably will take another look at how it interprets a new smoking ban, a department lobbyist said.

The ban temporarily exempts bars with fewer than 10 employees. The department has been counting as employees volunteers for groups such as the Knights of Columbus who don't serve alcohol.

Med school to upgrade

VA RICHMOND — Virginia Commonwealth University plans to hire more than 80 research faculty members over the next six years and spend millions on a laboratory building and other space.

Fifteen years ago, VCU ranked 34th among the country's 121 medical schools in its share of National Institutes of Health research dollars. The school's ranking slipped to 60th in 2003.

Mistrial in nurse case

TX SAN ANGELO — Already delayed several times, the capital murder trial of a nurse accused of killing 10 elderly patients was over almost before it began as a judge declared a mistrial.

About 15 minutes into opening statements, prosecutor Ralph Guerrero told jurors Monday that they would hear evidence against Vickie Dawn Jackson, but that no one — not even Jackson herself — may ever be able to provide a motive.

Defense attorney Bruce Martin interrupted Guerrero, objecting that the remark improperly indicated Jackson would testify. The defendant in a criminal case is not obligated to testify.

The judge granted a new trial, now set for March 29.

"These things happen. Some times there are procedural or other problems and you have to start all over," Martin said.

Jackson is accused of killing 10 patients, including her third husband's grandfather, by injecting them with a drug used to temporarily halt breathing. She could get life in prison if convicted.

Gov. to go door to door

WV CHARLESTON — Gov. Joe Manchin says he will go door to door this summer to encourage West Virginians to approve a \$5.5 billion bond sale.

Proceeds would be used to erase shortfalls in pension programs for teachers, State Police troopers and the judiciary. A special election is set for June 25.

Superintendent needed

MI LANSING — Applications to become Michigan's next K-12 schools superintendent are due April 8.

The State Board of Education set the deadline to replace Tom Watkins, who resigned under pressure Jan. 29.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm doesn't have the power to hire or fire the schools chief, but she wanted Watkins gone after they feuded in public over his leadership skills.

AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Cold slows syrup flow

OH CHARDON — Maple syrup producers are worried a cold snap this week will cause another delay in maple sugaring season in northeast Ohio.

Maple trees were tapped for the sugar-laden sap when temperatures rose earlier this week, but the change in the weather could delay production for at least another week. Trees need warm days to stimulate sap flow.

Gold Rush plates end

AK ANCHORAGE — The Division of Motor Vehicles has stopped making Alaska's Gold Rush Centennial license plate.

The blue, white and yellow plates depict prospector horses who came to Alaska in the 1890s.

The plates began appearing on vehicles in 1998. Motorists needing new plates will have to settle for the standard blue-on-yellow version with the Alaska state flag.

Student hangs in video

GA SAVANNAH — A college student was seriously injured while acting out a hanging for a film project.

Daryl Goins and other students were making a movie for class at his home Saturday night. The script had been approved by a professor, but Goins, 20, allegedly decided to change the ending.

"There was a suicide scene at the end, and he changed the technique," Geoffrey Jowett, dean of

students for Savannah College of Art and Design, told the Savannah Morning News. "It was a hanging, an accident based on the stunt."

Details were sketchy, but during the scene Goins somehow hit his head. Jowett said other students gave him CPR. He was hospitalized in serious condition.

Police have the video and are investigating. The school is reviewing whether to pursue disciplinary action.

Goins was enrolled in an Introduction to Video class. Students at the college are required to take a safety course before filming, sign a contract confirming they have read all safety regulations and have scripts approved by a faculty member.

Wettest winter ever

NM ALBUQUERQUE — New Mexico experienced its wettest winter in recorded history, the National Climatic Data Center in North Carolina said.

The statewide average of 4.33 inches of precipitation during the winter from December through February is the most for the state since records began to be kept in 1896. It also was the eighth-warmest winter on record, the data center said.

Stolen truck 'hot' item

MA FALL RIVER — Police arrested a man who was driving a stolen vehicle that was "hot" in more ways than one — the pickup owned by Cardinal Health Nuclear Pharmacy Services contained radioactive material.

The pickup was reportedly stolen Tuesday while it was parked in Seekonk. It was later spotted by two police officers about 10 miles away in Fall River.

Fall River Sgt. Roger LaFleur said he and the other officer followed the truck cautiously because of its reportedly radioactive contents and slick road conditions. They took the driver into custody after the pickup stopped.

A city hazardous materials team that inspected the truck determined the five containers carrying suspected radioactive material had not been opened.

Freedom offered for sex

PA CARLEISLE — A police officer coerced three women into having sex with him by threatening to arrest them for prostitution if they refused, a prosecutor said.

Cpl. Kenny Johnson of the Middlesex Township, Cumberland County, police was on trial Monday on charges including rape, sexual assault and obstruction of justice.

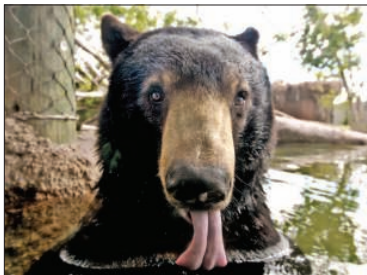
Johnson, 43, of North Middleton Township, was arrested in a sting operation in which a female probation officer posed as a prostitute. He was suspended without pay.

A Newville-area woman who said she was a prostitute at truck stops testified that over three years beginning in 1998, she had sex with Johnson in his police car, at the police station and at his home. Johnson told her she wouldn't get arrested when he was on duty, and had even driven her to a truck stop where she worked as a prostitute, she told the jury.



Irish tradition

Piper Phil Cormier of North Reading, Mass., a member of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, performs at a St. Patrick's Day parade in Clinton, Mass.



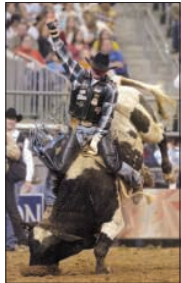
Up close and personal

One of two Maine black bears presses up against the glass in their compound at the Palm Beach Zoo in Florida. The zoo recently held its grand opening of the new black bear exhibit. The twin bears, named Lewis and Clark, are now 4 years old and weigh about 420 pounds. They came to the zoo when their mother was killed by a car when they were about 2 months old and weighing 13 pounds.



See how easy it is

Scott McArthur, 14, of Elkins, W.Va., prepares to snowboard down a ramp of snow at the Capitol in Charleston, W.Va. The West Virginia Ski Area Association put on a snowboarding demonstration to promote the state's five alpine ski resorts.

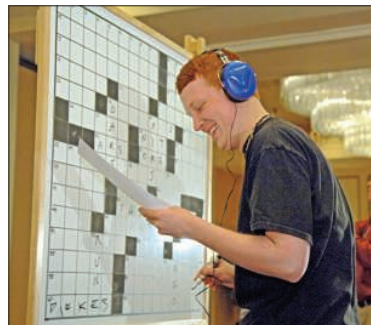


He's got a good grip

Jason Legler, of Pierce, Colo., rides a bull named Cat Daddy, during the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo in Houston.



Going up in flames An unidentified Pittsburg, Kan., firefighter battles flames engulfing a building in downtown Fort Scott, Kan. The Pittsburg department, located about 30 miles south of Fort Scott, was among several called in to assist in fighting the blaze, which consumed or heavily damaged at least six historic districts. The building shown was built in 1890.



A five-letter word for winner c-h-a-m-p, Tyler Hinman, 20, of Troy, N.Y., works on the Division A championship crossword puzzle in Stamford, Conn., during the American Crossword Puzzle Tournament. Hinman, a junior at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, is the youngest winner of the national crossword puzzle championship.



Finding a dry seat Fernanda Sales, of Framingham, Mass., sits on the backrest of a bench partially covered in snow in front of stadium seating at Butterworth Park in Framingham, Mass. following a winter storm.

Keep pledge in English

MD MILLERSVILLE — A Maryland teen is protesting his school's decision to broadcast the Pledge of Allegiance in languages other than English during National Foreign Language Week. Patrick Linton, a ninth-grader at Old Mill High School in Millersville, said he and some other students sat down rather than stand when the pledge was read in Russian over the school's public address system. "This is America, and we got soldiers at war," said the 15-year-old. "When you're saying the pledge in a different language which nobody understands, that's not OK."

School system spokesman Jonathan Brice said the readings in Spanish, French, Latin, Russian and German were "just a way to connect what's going on in the classroom."

Charges for dog attack

VA SPOTSYLVANIA — A prosecutor said he will seek involuntary manslaughter charges against the owner of three pit bulls that fatally mauled an 82-year-old woman.

Attorney William Neely said he will ask Spotsylvania County grand jurors next week to indict Deanna Large, 36, in the death of Dorothy Sullivan, who was killed as she walked her dog in her Parlow yard.

Sullivan and her small dog, Buttons, were attacked and killed by three wandering pit bulls, all of which have since been killed.

Large admitted owning one of the dogs, but Neely said the ensuing investigation revealed that she owned all three and had been warned to keep them under better control.

Visitors bite snake lure

TX SWEETWATER — Attendees of the World's Largest Rattlesnake Round-Up leave with a range of memories, the most enduring perhaps being the odorous snakes.

"It stinks, especially when they're butchering them," said Scott Pardee, 16, of Abilene, as he looked into an area where men chopped off snakes' heads.

It's the smell of success to people such as Lynn Adams, executive director of the Sweetwater Chamber of Commerce.

Now in its 47th year, the round-up draws 30,000 people to Sweetwater with a population of about 11,500. Visitors "not only come to see the rattlesnakes but to spend money," Adams said with a smile.

The event, which continued through Monday, generates hundreds of thousands of dollars in economic impact, said Kati Bewley, a Sweetwater Jaycee.

Pickers chanted down

CO COLORADO SPRINGS — Ten members of a Topeka, Kan., church famous for its demonstrations against the gay community received a rude welcome when they picketed Palmer High School.

More than 500 people turned out with banners and chants to condemn the Westboro Baptist Church demonstrators as messengers of hatred, not Christian love.

On a public sidewalk, Westboro church members raised their anti-gay signs. Across the street, hundreds faced them shouting "No

more hate" and other chants.

N.J. promotes kindness

NJ TRENTON — A kinder, gentler New Jersey? In a state where one former governor once joked that the official bird was "the middle finger," Assemblymen Jon M. Bramnick and Gordon Johnson think a few more random acts of kindness couldn't hurt.

A resolution under consideration in the state Legislature is encouraging residents to join "a campaign toward civility, kindness and respect to all."

Last year, then-Gov. James E. McGreevey declared a Random Acts of Kindness Day.

Car sale while stumping

IA DES MOINES — He came to sell President Bush's plan to overhaul Social Security. Instead, U.S. Sen. Charles Grassley sold his beat-up old car.

The 1986 Olds Delta 88 sold for \$356 to an Iowa factory worker. The gray Oldsmobile, with 172,511 miles, paint peeling off the body and a Volkswagen hubcap on one wheel, was used in political advertisements last year during Grassley's re-election campaign.

The deal started last month at a town meeting, where Grassley was explaining Bush's Social Security plan. Roy Nelson, 41, was there with his four daughters. One of them stood up and asked him about the car because she was turning 16 within a month.

"Grassley told her that the book value was \$357," but today I'd sell it to you for \$356," Nelson said. "I looked at him and said, 'Sold.'"

Cheaper gas woes

NE GRAND ISLAND — Some customers may have thought it was simple justice. Also, it was technology that prevented a gas station's sign from displaying any price \$2 or higher.

Byron Wheeler, who owns a Byco gas station, said he kept prices below the \$2 mark for five days last week because the station's electronic sign couldn't display a "2" in the dollar position.

Wheeler said the company is upgrading the sign, which has been in place at the station's convenience store since the business opened in 1991. But until the sign can be brought up to its specs, the er is displaying only the time and temperature.

Observation deck coming

NY NEW YORK — A 70-story-high observation deck at Rockefeller Center will reopen this fall after a \$75 million renovation, the complex's co-owner said.

The deck, atop 30 Rockefeller Center, has been closed since 1986, when the Rainbow Room restaurant expanded into its space. It is expected to draw about two million visitors a year, according to Tishman Speyer Properties, co-owners of Rockefeller Center.

At 850 feet above street level, it will be the city's second-highest observatory (the highest is atop the Empire State Building, which is about 200 feet higher).

The observation deck atop the World Trade Center was the city's highest until the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

Stories and photos from wire services

FACES

When fans get fanatic

Famous figures often
forced to deal with
out-of-control devotees

BY DERRIK J. LANGE
The Associated Press

NEW YORK

They're out there.

Catherine Zeta-Jones, Sheryl Crow and Mel Gibson recently faced theirs in court. Anna Kournikova's took a nude swim to find her. Andrea Evans feared hers for a decade.

They're celebrity stalkers, perpetrators of an emotional crime that's often — but not always — the result of mental illness.

Despite a recent rash of cases, experts say the act of celebrity stalking isn't increasing, but stars are more willing to go to police when confronted. And, of course, the media is more likely to cover subsequent arrests and trials. All this has led to specialized police units and even entire businesses aimed at dealing with a troubled few.

Evans was playing soap star Tina Clayton on "One Life to Live" in the 1980s when her stalker showed up several times at her Manhattan set. He once slashed his wrists outside the studios, then used Evans' name as his next-of-kin. "All of a sudden, I went from a nice happy-go-lucky life to having regular conversations with the police," Evans said. "This was before people were that aware. There was a great disbelief that here this man was trying to harm me and the police could do nothing about it."

After three years of living in terror, Evans quit "One Life to Live" and dropped out of public view. She wouldn't be seen on a soap again until 1999.

Following the murder of "My Sister Sam" actress Rebecca Schaeffer in 1989 and incidents like Evans', the government, Hollywood and the world began to recognize celebrity stalking about 1990.

As many armchair sleuths have learned from "CSI," material crimes like burglary and murder leave copious amounts of physical evidence — but stalking is harder to prove. Witness the love-struck Crow fan who was acquitted last November after ardently pursuing the singer for 15 months, claiming he communicated with her telepathically and even visiting her sister's father.

"Stalking is much more nebulous, much more of a challenge," said John Lane, a former Los Angeles Police Department detective. "It is very difficult to investigate."

Laws now exist in all states to combat stalking in some form or another. In Los Angeles, the LAPD's Threat Management Unit exclusively tackles stalking. In 2004, it handled 60 celebrity cases. That's typical, according to the unit's leader, Det. Jeff Dunn.



Above: William Lepaske, far left, was accused in February of stalking tennis player Anna Kournikova. Right: Dawnette Knight pleaded no contest in June to stalking and threatening actress Catherine Zeta-Jones. Far right: Mel Gibson leaves the Los Angeles Superior Court on March 3 after testifying against Zack Sinclair, who was convicted the next day of stalking the actor.

AP photos

"I think there's a rise in reporting," said Dunn. "Early in the '90s, there was reluctance for fear of negative publicity. I don't think they were widely reported. Now in 2005, you can't turn on the TV without seeing a story about some sort of stalking. It doesn't carry the negative stigma anymore."

In recent years, the likes of Pamela Anderson, Madonna, Steven Spielberg, Nicole Kidman, David Letterman and Gwyneth Paltrow have claimed stalkers. In the past few weeks alone, people were convicted or pleaded no contest to stalking Gibson and Zeta-Jones.

And in the Anna Kournikova case, a man was arrested Jan. 30 after swimming nude across a Florida bay toward Kournikova's \$5 million estate, then turning up on the pool deck at the wrong house and yelling, "Anna! Save me!"

Dunn said for every celebrity stalking case that's splashed across headlines, 20 are never heard about. Those type of cases often fall to Lane, who after helping establish the LAPD anti-stalking unit started his own personal security firm, Omega Threat Management Inc. It's one of several such companies that take care of celebrities' threats — for a price.

Much like murder, mental health plays a major part in the crime of stalking. But stalking isn't always the result of a mental disorder.

"Most of the time, what you've got is an individual who is lonely or socially incompetent," said Mace Benson, a psychiatrist at the University of California-Los Angeles who's worked on many stalking cases.

Celebrity stalkers

■ **Dec. 8, 1980:** Mark David Chapman shot and killed John Lennon. He's now serving a life sentence and has been denied parole three times.

■ **March 30, 1981:** John Hinckley Jr. attempted to assassinate President Ronald Reagan to gain actress Jodie Foster's attention. He was found not guilty by reason of insanity and remains in a psychiatric hospital.

■ **June 1, 1989:** Margaret Ray pleaded guilty to breaking and entering talk show host David Letterman's house. Diagnosed with schizophrenia, she served 10 months in prison and 14 months in a mental institution. In 1998, she committed suicide.

■ **Jan. 8, 1996:** Robert Hoskins convicted of assault, stalking and threatening to kill Madonna. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison.

■ **July 11, 1998:** Jonathan Norman caught breaking into the home of director Steven Spielberg with the intention of raping the director. He was sentenced to 25 years to life in prison.

■ **Sept. 5, 2000:** Mark Bailey sentenced to 10 years' probation and ordered to attend counseling twice weekly after sending threatening letters to Brooke Shields.

■ **Dec. 14, 2000:** Dante Michael Sola convicted of stalking Gwyneth Paltrow. He was sent to a high-security mental facility after a judge found him insane.

— The Associated Press



Quentin Tarantino

Brits laud Tarantino, others

Quentin Tarantino, director of cult movies "Pulp Fiction" and "Reservoir Dogs," was named Film Icon of the Decade at an awards ceremony in London.

Tarantino was among a cast of Hollywood and British movie talent recognized Sunday during the Empire Awards, which were voted for by more than 12,000 readers of Empire Magazine.

Accepting his award, the 41-year-old announced plans to retire from movie directing.

"I hope to give you at least 15 more years of movies, I'm not going to be this old guy that keeps cranking them out," Tarantino said.

Other award recipients included Matt Damon, who was voted Best Actor for his role in "The Bourne Supremacy." The action thriller also was named Best Film.

Julie Delpy was awarded Best Actress for "Before Sunset," and Kate Winslet's performance in "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" won her the Best British Actress Award.

Beatty takes jabs at Arnold

Warren Beatty, an actor who has been politically active for four decades, has some words of advice for fellow film star and now Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. Schwarzenegger should raise taxes on the California rich and "terminate" his

fund-raising and dinners with "the brokers of Wall Street" and the "lobbyists of The Action," Beatty said.

Receiving a political award Friday night, the actor who played Sen. Jay Byington Bulworth in the 1998 movie, "Bulworth," said: "Arnold. Be the action hero I know you can be. Be strong. Stand up and confront the wealthiest 1 percent of Californians who have benefited \$12 billion a year from the Bush tax cuts."

Beatty received the third annual Phillip Burton public service award Friday from the Santa Monica-based Foundation for Taxpayer and Consumer Rights for a lifetime of political work. Burton was a liberal San Francisco congressman who died in 1983.

Stories and photo from The Associated Press

YOUR MONEY

Playing your cards right

Charles Weber of Alexandria, Va., notified an alarming "change in terms" alert on his latest Citibank MasterCard bill: "For each purchase made in a foreign currency, we add an additional finance charge of 3 percent of the amount of the purchase after its conversion into U.S. dollars."

Weber, in addition to being angry, was curious: "How prevalent has this policy become?" he asked us in an e-mail.

Increasingly prevalent. The nonprofit advocacy group Consumer Action last spring surveyed 45 companies that issue credit cards and found that 26 were adding currency conversion fees — up from 17 the year before. What you need to know:

■ When converting overseas charges into dollars, Visa uses the wholesale exchange rate plus a 1 percent conversion fee. MasterCard and American Express add 2 percent.

■ The companies that issue Visa and MasterCard may add another fee, typically 1 percent to 3 percent. (American Express issues its own cards.)

■ Issuing companies that don't add an extra fee: Capital One, MBNA and numerous smaller banks and credit unions.

■ Among issuing companies that charge an extra fee: Bank of America, Citibank, Chase Manhattan and Wells Fargo.

Our advice: No matter how you spend money overseas, there is no way to avoid foreign currency conversion fees. Credit cards remain a good option — if you play your cards right.

From The Washington Post

Prepaid cell phones attracting attention

The Dallas Morning News

DALLAS — Two-year contracts are fine for cell-phone users who have good credit and don't mind being tied to a single company and a single wireless plan for that long.

But what about people who don't have the credit, the bank account or the desire to sign up for a long-term contract with the big cellular companies? The answer for an increasing number of users: pay-as-you-go cellular service.

Parents buy prepaid service for their children. Senior citizens use it for emergencies. Low-income people and immigrants without bank accounts pay for the service in cash.

"I think prepaid wireless is one of the most exciting things that has happened in telecom in a while," said Judy Reed Smith, chief executive of consulting firm Atlantic-ACM.

In the traditional pay-as-you-go plan, a customer can buy a card similar to long-distance cards sold at convenience stores, drugstores and general retailers. Each card comes with a set amount of minutes.

In hybrid plans, customers can have their credit cards or bank accounts charged each month to buy a set number of minutes. But they can quit anytime they want rather than tied to a contract.

No matter what way, almost

all prepaid services offer the same attractions — no contracts, no credit checks, no charges for early termination and usually no long-distance charges.

Stephen Wellman, executive director of the industry newsletter PierceWireless, said prepaid wireless began taking off when Virgin Mobile decided to bring its prepaid service to the United States.

Now most big wireless companies offer some form of prepaid service.

In 2003, 5.5 million of the 16.9 million prepaid customers came from "mobile virtual network operators" such as Virgin Mobile or Tracfone Wireless Inc., she said.

By 2009, she said the number of prepaid users will boom to 41.3 million, with 32.8 million, or about 79 percent, coming from those resellers.

Annual revenue will soar as well, she said, from \$400 million in 1997 to \$7 billion in 2004 to \$22 billion in 2009.

Smith said the cards suit callers in challenging financial situations, people who are "credit-challenged, unbanked or cost-conscious," she said.

"The unbanked aren't just people who can't get banking. It's the people who only write a couple of checks a month, who distrust banks, who would rather get their 7-Eleven and cash their check and put part of it in their prepaid phone and part of it in something else like a prepaid card or have cash," she said.

Encoding files with trick fonts is risky

Q. To keep my documents away from prying eyes at the office, I saved some of them in the Windings font that turns each letter into some kind of graphic symbol like an asterisk, arrow or a Greek letter.

Later I was able to convert it back from Windings to Times Roman or another readable font.

At home I was trying to protect my document from other spying eyes and thought I would save the document in Marlett font. Unfortunately, now I am unable to convert it back to Times or Roman or any readable font. Can you help?

A. You stumbled into a land mine with that particular font to replace letters in a document with gobbledygook.

The strange markings that Marlett characters are used not to make visible symbols like those Windings but rather to handle elements of the Windows screen display such as scroll bars, buttons, arrows and the like.

When one selects all the text in the Times Roman font and then uses the Format/Font command to translate them into Marlett, they can only be translated back into Times Roman as a meaningless small empty box for every letter.

The good news is that other Microsoft fonts used for bookkeeping can be used to make a Times Roman-to-Marlett transfer recoverable. For example, if you select all of the characters in

Marlett and then translate them into the boldface, cursive Microdot format, they will be legible again.

That not only fixes your problem, but also gives you an additional code trick to frustrate prying eyes.

Q. I have a new Dell Pentium 4 operating on Windows XP and I have lost my icons on the opening desktop screen and do not know how to restore them.

Can you help me?

A. You will notice that if you give the cursor arrow icon a right-click while hovering over that blank desktop screen a menu of commands will pop up. At the top is one for Arrange Icons. Move the arrow to that and it will open up a set of choices that include one called "Show Desktop Icons."

Click that line to place a check mark alongside it and then sit back as your hard drive churns a bit and the desktop gets redrawn with the icons intact.

It is worth adding that this check mark should be in place by default and so something you did must have changed it. It is also worth adding that many people are glad to learn about this ability to toggle the desktop icon display because it can be another handy tool to shield what you are doing from the view of passers-by.

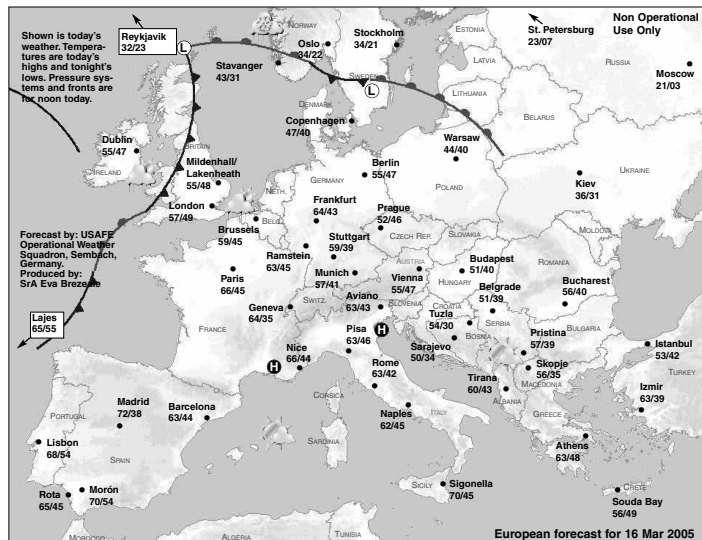
Contact Jim Coates via e-mail at jcoates@tribune.com or via snail mail at the Chicago Tribune, Room 400, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60611. Questions can be answered only through this column. Add your point of view at www.chicagotribune.com/askjim.

Ask Jim

Jim Coates

MONDAY'S MARKET SUMMARY

INDEXES					
52-week High	52-week Low	Name	Last	% Chg	52-week % Chg
10,804.46	9,706.40	Dow Jones Industrials	10,804.51	+1.20	+12.14
3,689.97	2,543.06	Dow Jones Transportation	3,689.51	+0.59	+14.38
363.62	293.08	Dow Jones Utilities	360.62	+1.88	+17.31
7,276.38	6,160.72	Nasdaq Composite	7,276.38	+1.88	+17.31
1,539.14	1,150.74	Amerex Index	1,482.59	-0.80	+5.23
2,191.60	1,750.82	Nasdaq Composite	2,051.84	+0.44	+6.57
1,243.46	1,060.72	S&P 500	1,243.46	+0.59	+14.38
683.36	548.29	S&P MidCap	673.51	+0.01	+7.54
656.11	515.90	Russell 2000	630.00	+3.46	+3.26
1,194.11	1,060.72	S&P 500	1,194.11	+0.00	+11.64



EUROPEAN FORECAST

Benelux: Mostly cloudy with rain-showers. Highs in the lower 50s to lower 60s. Thursday lows in the mid to upper 40s.

Britain, Ireland: Mostly cloudy with rainshowers. Highs in the mid to upper 50s. Thursday lows in the upper 40s.

Croatia and Bosnia: Partly cloudy with morning fog. Highs in the mid to lower 50s. Thursday lows in the lower to mid 30s.

France: Partly cloudy with morning rainshowers in the north. Highs in the mid-60s. Thursday lows in the

Northern Germany: Mostly cloudy with isolated rainshowers. Highs in the mid-50s to mid-60s. Thursday

Southern Germany: Partly cloudy. Highs in the upper 50s to lower 60s. Thursday lows in the upper 30s to

Hungary: Partly to mostly cloudy. Highs in the lower 50s. Thursday lows in the lower 40s.

Northern Italy: Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 60s. Thursday lows in the lower to mid-40s.

Kosovo: Partly cloudy. Highs in the mid to upper 50s. Thursday lows in

Norway: Cloudy with rain and snow-showers. Highs in the mid-30s to lower 40s. Thursday lows in the

Portugal, Spain: Partly cloudy with morning fog. Highs in the lower 60s to lower 70s. Thursday lows in the

Turkey: Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 50 to lower 60s, upper 60s to the south. Thursday lows in the

For current weather watches, warnings, and 5-day forecasts go to the NCEP.noaa.gov

Operational Weather Squadron home
page at:
<https://ows.sembach.af.mil>
<http://ows.public.sembach.af.mil>

SUN & MOON

	Today	Tomorrow
Sunrise (Baghdad)	0613 A.M.	0612 A.M.
Sunrise (Frankfurt)	0639 A.M.	0637 A.M.
Sunset (Baghdad)	1811 P.M.	1811 P.M.
Sunset (Frankfurt)	1831 P.M.	1832 P.M.

New moon First qtr. Full moon Last qtr.

TESTS TODAY

AFRICA

	HI	LO		HI	LO
Cape Town	87	64	Mogadishu	89	70
Dakar	80	67	Nairobi	83	59
Freetown	90	77	Rabat	72	53

THE WORLD

	HI	LO		HI	LO
Amsterdam	51	45	Manila	87	79
Bahrain	72	60	Mexico City	70	41
Beijing	57	27	Montreal	33	1
Beirut	67	55	Riyadh	77	55
Bermuda	65	56	Rio de Jan	89	78
Caracas	86	73	Seoul	52	29
Helsinki	21	07	Sofia	50	30
Hong Kong	70	57	Sydney	79	69
Lisbon	68	54	Tokyo	59	44

TODAY'S STATESIDE OUTLOOK

[illegible]

27	PC	Nash	47	34	Rain	San Angelo	47	32	City
28	PC	New Orleans	60	34	Rain	San Antonio	58	39	City
29	PC	New York	57	34	Rain	San Bernardino	57	39	City
30	PC	Newark	58	30	PC	San Diego	58	40	PC
31	PC	North Carolina	57	34	Rain	San Francisco	57	40	PC
32	PC	North Dakota	57	37	PC	San Jose	57	41	PC
33	PC	Oakland	57	37	PC	San Juan	57	41	PC
34	PC	Oklahoma	57	37	PC	San Luis Obispo	57	41	PC
35	PC	Oregon	57	37	PC	Seattle	57	41	PC
36	PC	Pennsylvania	62	33	Rain	Shawnee	57	49	Rain
37	PC	Pennsylvania	62	33	Rain	Shawnee	57	49	Rain
38	PC	Philadelphia	60	30	PC	Shawnee	57	49	Rain
39	PC	Pittsburgh	41	22	PC	Sikeston	57	49	PC
40	PC	Pittsburgh	41	22	PC	Sikeston	57	49	PC
41	PC	Pittsburgh	41	22	PC	Sikeston	57	49	PC
42	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
43	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
44	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
45	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
46	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
47	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
48	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
49	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
50	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
51	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
52	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
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62	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
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64	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
65	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
66	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
67	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
68	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
69	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
70	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
71	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
72	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
73	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
74	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
75	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
76	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
77	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
78	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
79	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
80	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
81	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
82	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
83	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
84	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
85	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
86	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
87	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
88	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
89	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
90	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
91	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
92	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
93	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
94	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
95	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
96	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
97	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
98	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
99	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC
100	PC	Portland	58	30	PC	Springfield	58	30	PC

As of noon, Eastern U.S. time for the day.

Bands represent high temperature zones for the day.

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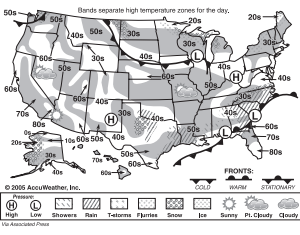
Legend:

- Pressure: High (H), Low (L)
- Fronts: Cold (line with triangles), Warm (line with semicircles), Stationary (line with alternating triangles and semicircles)
- Weather: Rain (cloud with rain), Thunder (cloud with lightning), Tornado (funnel), Snow (cloud with snow), Fog (cloud with X's), Ice (cloud with ice crystals), Sunny (sun), Partly Cloudy (sun and cloud), Cloudy (cloud)

U.S. Associated Press

THE UNITED STATES TODAY

As of noon, Eastern U.S. time



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Pressure:           

Use Associated Poles

Scheduled to **ETS** or **PCS**?

Check our Relocation Guide
every Saturday to find
Realtors at your new station.

STARS  STRIPES
Your Hometown Newspaper

Horoscope

A super-lucky aspect involving the moon, Jupiter and Neptune promises there is much to gain from talking about your wants, desires, dreams and goals. People need to help one another. Even if others haven't the physical or intellectual resources, the mere intention of helpfulness causes miraculous connections to occur. So speak up.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY

(March 16). Though careful planning brings certain goals to hand, leave room in your life for lucky things to just happen, too — you're a favorite of the universe, and if you trust, you will be granted special gifts. This month features a filtration; May brings love without changing your life for. Leo and Cancer are lucky romantic connections. Your career takes off in June.

ARIES (March 21-April 19).

Extra motivation is needed to get through this challenging day. Affirm to yourself over and over (100 times is barely enough) that you CAN do it. In fact, nobody does it better!

TAURUS (April 20-May 20).

Big, profound questions inform a million small decisions you'll make today about how to be and interact in your world. How will the world be a better place because you were in it?

GEMINI (May 21-June 21).

Someone near you is handing out points for being smart. But remember that being good is more important. The great genius scientist Albert Einstein said, "The most important human endeavor is striving for morality in our actions."

CANCER (June 22-July 22).

The critics are at large. Try and see the strength in others even when their weaknesses are being pointed out. If you can find a reason and a way to be joyful, your joy is contagious.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22).

You'll have the chance to be mature, though childish planets play in your psyche, making it easy for you not to be. Consider that love with strings

attached isn't love at all. It's business, really, and more about cause and effect.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22).

Your emotions are not unlike the muscles in your body. They can be exercised to be more flexible, stronger and more toned. Dealing with children, or adults who act like children, gives you a real emotional workout today.

Holiday Mathis



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23).

When does obsession become unhealthy? Someone or something you desire could be draining vital energy from other areas of your life. If you give your power away, the only one who can get it back is you.

(SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 19). Planets provide plenty of distractions and opportunities for you to scatter your energy. If you can stay focused now, when it's challenging, you really can't lose. So stay on purpose.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21).

It's better to remain a mystery to certain people. Let them project themselves, making up their own story about who you are. You'll find humor in the scenarios they come up with.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19).

Since who you love has such an enormous impact on the rest of your life, it makes sense to pour your time and energy into that area. Put all your emotions and your imagination toward creating a better relationship.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18).

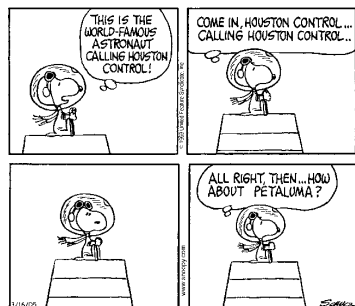
Address that unattained desire that's been on your list of New Year's resolutions for years now. Invest yourself in finally having this. The more defined your goal is, the more likely you are to obtain it.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20).

Avoidance might work in the short term, but sooner or later, you'll have to face your fear. The weak person prays to be sheltered from adversity, while the strong one prays for the courage to conquer it.

Creators Syndicate

Peanuts



Calvin and Hobbes



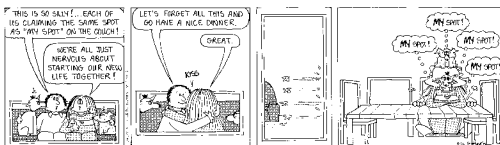
Jump Start



Zits



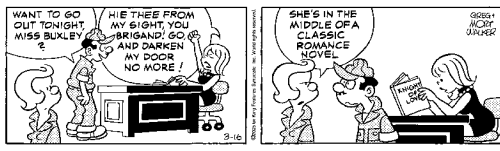
Cathy



Hi and Lois



Beetle Bailey



Red Rover



Better or Worse



Fotrot



B.C.



Baby Blues



Spider Man



Blondie



Dilbert



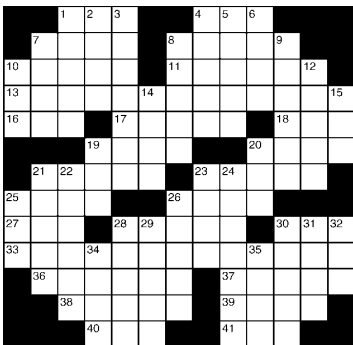
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



Across

- 1 Possesses
- 4 Orchestra's place
- 7 Fruit part
- 8 Tea variety
- 10 Cha-cha's cousin
- 11 Squirrel's stash
- 13 "Back at One" singer
- 16 Succor
- 17 Estimate
- 18 401(k) alternative
- 19 Panhandles
- 20 From square one
- 21 Terkel or Lonigan
- 23 All better
- 25 Stop up
- 26 "— and

Down

- 1 Like mid-August
- 2 Actress Jessica
- 3 Freeloaded
- 4 Bushel quarters
- 5 Religious images (var.)
- 6 Aaron's daughter
- 7 — mutual
- 8 Walks
- 9 Motor
- 10 Biz deg.
- 12 Vestige
- 14 Oktoberfest crockery
- 15 Spotted, or Rozelle
- 17 Imperfection

- 20 Dadaist pioneer
- 21 Casino temptation
- 22 Hotel guests' needs
- 23 Barbershop item
- 24 Diamond experts?
- 25 Eye network
- 26 "What's My Line?" group
- 28 Merriment
- 29 Crowbar
- 30 Jacob's ladder, e.g.
- 31 Featherly stoies
- 32 Mole, maybe
- 34 Rose
- 35 Antitoxins

Answer to Previous Puzzle

W	I	S	H	K	E	N	D	O	J	O
A	S	H	Y	A	X	E	N	O	L	
S	L	U	E	H	I	A	W	A	T	H
P	E	N	N	A	N	T	I	R	O	N
B	A	S	S	A	D	S	A	N	T	
A	N	O		D	O	M	O	B	I	
H	Y	D	R	A	N	T	C	H	I	C
E	R	A	B	A						
A	S	P	I	C	F	I	R	I	N	G
H	E	I	G	H	T	E	N	K	O	L
E	V	E	N	W	E	D	U	S	E	S
M	E	S	S	A	S	S	S	E	E	S

3-16

CRYPTOQUIP

EB XG W.X. CXRFCXWW
 AZL NXR X TGXJT BLZ
 RTFIJNEGD AEIQZFR. ER

NF XG XZIBQW OLODFZ?
 Yesterday's Cryptoquip: I IMAGINE THAT A CROSS BETWEEN A CANNON AND A BELL WOULD BE DUBBED "THE BOOMERANG."
 Today's Cryptoquip Clue: X equals A

Soon-to-be in-law has big mouth

Dear Abby: I am an operating room nurse. My soon-to-be mother-in-law recently had a procedure done that required anesthesia. When the anesthesiologist arrived to interview her before her procedure, she proceeded to ask him if he knew me. He replied that he did.

Her next question was whether he knew that I did cosmetic surgery. Thankfully, he acted in a professional manner by simply saying, "Oh?" She continued the interrogation by asking him if he was aware that I had been previously engaged, and whether he thought I was a runaway bride or not.

I was flabbergasted that she had the gall to bring up such personal things with someone with whom I have a professional relationship. This is a small community where things spread like wildfire. I want to have a relationship with her, but I feel as though she kicked me in the stomach and stabbed me in

the back. Is there anything I can say to mommy, I love you so much, as he often does, my heart melts. I should mention that he is still shorter than me, though barely. He is not the typical 15-year-old who towers over his mother.

Until recently, I thought our closeness would help him develop into a warm, loving man; but now, I'm wondering if this is healthy for him to be doing and for me to allow. I would hate to see him develop into a needy, clingy man or a mama's boy.

Dear Appalled: Your fiancé's mother may have been nervous at the prospect of her surgery, started babbling and couldn't stop. However, unless you want a strained relationship with your in-laws, do not "confront" her. She can't untie the bell. Now that you know she lacks judgment and looks like a rusty bucket, in the future confine nothing to her unless you want the whole town to know.

Dear Abby



Dear Abby: My son is 15. When we're home and watching TV in the evening, my son often enjoys cuddling up next to me. He'll put his head on my shoulder and wants my arm around his shoulders. I, too, enjoy this

Just a Loving Mom in Australia
Dear Loving Mom: Every parent should be so blessed as to have a son like yours. You have raised a loving only child who is bonded to his parents. If he doesn't start dating by the time he's 18, THEN there may be cause to worry. Otherwise, he sounds just fine to me.

Letters for this column — with your name and phone number — should be addressed to Dear Abby, P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles CA 90069. Readers can write to Abby on the Internet at: <http://www.ueppress.com/dearabby>
Universal Press Syndicate

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter at each square, to form four ordinary words.

EGGRO

CUFOS

TENCED

GARNAL

A: THE

WAS

THE

THE

THE

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THE

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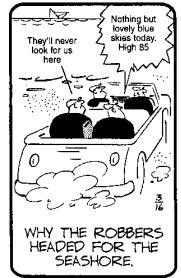
THE

THE

THE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

A: THE

WAS

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

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THE

THE

THE

THE

THE

Affair leaves woman confused

Dear Annie: I am a married woman with one child. We don't lack for anything. My husband is an OK guy and a good father, but he's very self-centered.

Last May, one of my neighbors started to show an interest in me. "Jack" — also is married (his wife is a bit of a hypochondriac), and he has a small child. A few months ago, at a party we both attended, Jack had a few drinks and gave me a passionate kiss. I have never been kissed like that in my life. It sent shivers through my entire body. After that, we would slip away and kiss here and there. Then it started to be more. Now we have a secret affair going on.

I don't want to get caught, but I also don't want to give him up. It is like I finally found my soul mate.

— Very Confused

Dear Confused: Don't confuse passion kisses with Jack being your soul mate. This is lust, not love. Are you willing to wreck two

Annie's Mailbox



marriages and destroy your child's sense of security for shock waves? Illicit affairs can be temporarily exciting, but the consequences are often permanently painful.

Tell your husband you want to see a counselor. If he won't go, go without him. Learn how to put some of that sexual energy into your marriage, or make a clean break.

Dear Annie: I am responding to the letter from "Negative Dad." He said his son's blood type is O, while his is AB and his wife's is A. He assumed he was not his son's biological father.

Classification into the major blood groups is based on the presence or absence of two proteins, the A and B antigens, produced by the A and B alleles. The absence of either A or B antigens is called Type O.

The son gets one gene from each parent. If the parent has one

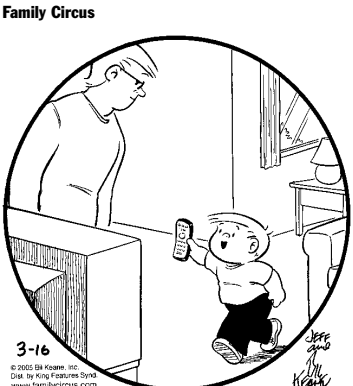
chromosome with an antigen and one without, he or she can pass either one on to the child. The writer, told he is "type AB," assumes he must pass on either the A or the B allele, but cannot have a son with neither. But other factors may block the expression of these alleles, so the blood of the child with A or B or AB genotype may be reported as Type O. These other factors are not reported in ordinary ABO typing. There is also the possibility of laboratory error.

The reader should seek a consultation with a geneticist and not proceed with a potentially destructive confrontation on the basis of the major blood types.

— Gordon Harper, M.D., Harvard Medical School

Dear Dr. Harper: Thank you for providing a valid reason for Dad to believe his son belongs to him biologically as well as in every other way.

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, longtime editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to anniemail@comcast.net, or write to: Annie's Mailbox, c/o Creators Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90045.
Creators Syndicate



"You're right! I found the remote in the very right place I looked."

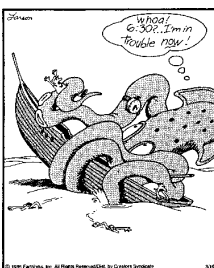


Domis the Menace

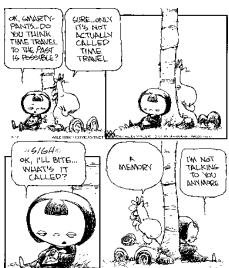


"ME AN RUFF THOUGHT WE'D SLEEP WITH YOU GUYS SO YOU WON'T BE AFRAID OF THE THUNDERSTORM."

The Far Side



Non Sequitur



Cleveland cuts E Brown

Redskins reportedly pursuing first pick of 2000 draft

The Associated Press

Cleveland released defensive end Courtney Brown on Monday, yet another former first-round pick who failed to make it with the team.

Washington Redskins coach George Blanda wasted no time pursuing Brown. Within hours of his release, Blanda flew to Cleveland with defensive line coach Greg Blache and a dinner with Brown and Brown's wife Monday night, an official within the league told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

The official said Brown was expected to visit Redskins Park later this week.

Brown, the first overall choice in the 2000 draft, was cut by Cleveland because he would not renegotiate his contract. He would have been a \$2.5 million player before Tuesday.

Brown's General Manager Phil Savage said he still hoped the team could re-sign the oft-injured defensive end.

But Brown quickly drew interest from other teams, including the Redskins. Washington is in need of a pass-rushing end, having relied heavily on linebackers and cornerbacks for many of their sacks last season.

There was also a teammate at Penn State with Redskins linebacker LaVar Arrington, the No. 2 overall pick in 2000. If Washington acquires Brown, the team will have the top three picks from that draft.

He was even, Arrington and tackle Chris Samuels.



Brown hasn't played a full season since his rookie year. He has missed 33 games with injuries over the past four seasons, including the final 14 games last year after tearing a ligament in his foot.

Without Brown, the first three No. 1 picks that Cleveland took after it returned to the league in 1999 are gone. Brown joins quarterback Tim Couch, the first overall pick in 1999, and defensive tackle Gerard Warren, No. 3 overall in 2001, as ex-Browns. Couch was released last June and Warren was traded to Denver on March 2 for a fourth-round pick.

The team also has given running back William Green, its first-round pick in 2002, permission to seek a trade.

In addition to letting Brown go Monday, Cleveland signed veteran defensive lineman Brian Fisk, Cincinnati made a similar move, signing defensive tackle Bryan Robinson, who played for Chicago the past six seasons.

The Oakland Raiders re-signed free agent defensive end Bobby Hamilton to a \$6 million, three-year contract, keeping a key member of their revamped defense from last season.

The 33-year-old Hamilton, known as a talented run defender, was the most consistent player on

the Raiders' rebuilt defensive front last season. He started 15 games last season and played in all 16 for the Raiders (5-11), recording 57 tackles — 36 solo — a sack and three pass deflections.

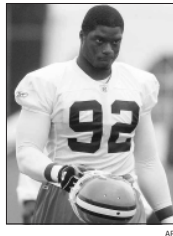
The Vikings welcomed former Buc QB Brad Johnson for a workout, now that they are in the market for a backup to Daunte Culpepper after sign with Miami.

Perot, who played behind Culpepper for the past two seasons, joined former Vikings offensive coordinator Scott Lincum with the Dolphins, according to Minnesota vice president for football operations Rob Brezinski.

"Brad had a great visit," coach Mike Tice said in an e-mail. "He was quite of very good ... has great anticipation on his throws. He would be a great fit for us."

The New York Giants cut defensive lineman Norman Hand, Miami cut fullback Rob Kolar, and Buffalo released Pierre Prieau after the backup safety rejected the team's offer to restructure his contract.

In Detroit, new backup Jeff Garcia said he has accepted his role behind Joey Harrington. Garcia was another player the Browns cut. "I'm not there to create any friction, I'm not there to create any controversy," Garcia said in a conference call, two days after agreeing to a one-year, \$2 million deal. "I'm just there to add strength to the position."



Courtney Brown has missed 33 games with injuries over the past four seasons, including 14 last season with a foot injury.

On Tuesday, free agent tight end Anthony Becht signed a five-year contract with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, a move coach Jon Gruden is counting on to help the club's inconsistent running game.

Becht, who the Jets selected with the 27th pick in the 2000 draft, contributed to the success of running back Curtis Martin, the NFL rushing champion last season.

In other news, the first NFL regular-season game outside the United States is expected to take place Oct. 2, when the Arizona Cardinals face San Francisco in Mexico City.

The game is expected to be a Sunday night contest televised by ESPN. It would be a home game for the Cardinals, who rarely sell out their stadium but could draw 100,000 or more in Mexico City. "We're working on it but it's not final yet," NFL spokesman Greg Alie said Tuesday.

Callahan's deposition might hurt Williams

By GUY ASHLEY
Contra Costa Times
(Walnut Creek, Calif.)

OAKLAND, Calif. — Former Oakland Raiders tight end Marcus Williams was a "work in progress" whose future as a professional football player hinged on whether he could bring more consistency to his blocking and pass-catching skills, his former coach said in a videotaped deposition played in court Monday.

"There was an uncertainty as to whether he would mature into an NFL-caliber player," former Raiders coach Bill Callahan said in the deposition he gave in August as part of Williams' lawsuit against former teammate Bill Romanowski.

Williams is seeking more than \$3.8 million in the suit, which accuses Romanowski of battery, intentional infliction of emotional distress and negligence in connection with an August 2003 practice field incident in which Romanowski tore off Williams' helmet and punched him in the left eye.

Williams' lawyers say the punch broke the client's eye socket and caused serious emotional and cognitive problems, ending his professional football career.

But Romanowski's lawyers have tried throughout the trial to minimize Williams' potential losses, asserting he was a marginal player whose future in the NFL was in doubt when he was injured.

This view of Williams may be bolstered by the statements from Callahan, who led the Raiders to the Super Bowl after the 2002 season but was fired after the team went 4-12 in 2003.

Williams was a rookie in 2002 and was trying to make the Raiders roster when he was felled by the Romanowski blow during the 2003 preseason. At the time, Callahan said, Williams was a regular on special teams who only occasionally displayed the skills needed to develop into a regular in the Raiders' offense.

"In Marcus' case, there were elements that flashed — but not on a consistent basis," said Callahan, who was the coach at the University of Nebraska.

If Romanowski is found liable, the issue of damages will hinge largely on whether the jury believes Callahan had a future in the NFL.

An economist testified last week that Williams could have suffered as much as \$8.7 million in lost earnings and medical costs by having his career ended. But that figure assumes Williams would have developed into a regular player and had an NFL career spanning at least seven seasons, economist Robert Johnson testified.

Had Williams not progressed, Johnson added, that figure could have been as low as \$1.6 million. Lawyers for Romanowski say they should complete their case Tuesday.

Georgia Tech's Gailey OK after heart attack

The Associated Press

ATLANTA — It was a normal morning for Chan Gailey. The Georgia Tech football coach was running around the racquetball court, getting a little exercise before going down to work.

Suddenly, he felt a tightening in his chest.

Then, a pain surged through his left arm.

He was having a heart attack. Gailey was rushed to the hospital Monday, where doctors performed a balloon angioplasty to clear an artery that was totally blocked. He was resting comfortably and expected to make a full recovery.

"It was tough and got a little while, it really was," athletic director Dave Braine said. "We were told it was serious, so everybody said a prayer and hoped he was going to be fine, and he is. His family — his wife and his two sons — are there with him and he's doing well."

Gailey, who turned 53 in January, began feeling pain during his usual early morning racquetball game at the campus recreation center. "He does it religiously every morning, so it isn't like he's not trying to take care of himself," Braine said.

Braine said the angioplasty was needed to clear an artery that was 100 percent blocked. He was aware of the coach having any heart problems.

"He'll be in hospital probably three or four days, but they do expect a complete recovery," Braine said. "We expect him to be back here within a few days."

The Yellow Jackets were scheduled to practice Tuesday, Friday and Saturday, then take next week off for spring break. School officials

were considering whether to cancel practice this week.

Kansas dismisses leading rusher

LAWRENCE, Kan. — Kansas' leading rusher John Randle was dismissed from the team Monday after being charged with hitting a man outside a bar.

Randle, a sophomore, was charged with misdemeanor battery for allegedly striking a man early Sunday morning in front of a downtown bar. Police said an officer saw the altercation and arrested the 20-year-old, who led Kansas with 540 yards rushing last season.

Pac-10 to use instant replay

LOS ANGELES — The Pacific-10 will use instant replay in football next season, utilizing a system similar to one the Big Ten used last year. A replay official located in the press box will make the replay decision rather than the referee on the field. Coaches will not be allowed to challenge calls.

NASCAR suspends three crew chiefs

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — NASCAR on Tuesday suspended the crew chiefs for Jimmie Johnson, Kyle Busch and Kevin Harvick in a swift crackdown on cheating committed at Las Vegas Motor Speedway.

Todd Berrier was suspended for four weeks and fined \$25,000 for rigging Harvick's fuel tank to appear full when it actually wasn't during qualifying.

Chad Knaus was suspended for two weeks and fined \$35,000 when Johnson's race-winning car failed to meet the minimum fuel requirement in Sunday's post-race inspection.

Alan Gustafson was suspended two weeks and fined \$25,000 because Busch's runner-up

car was too high in the post-race inspection.

In addition to the suspensions, the drivers were also docked 25 points. Rick Hendrick, the car owner for Johnson and Busch, was docked 50 points — 25 for each infraction. Richard Childress, the car owner for Harvick, was docked 25 points.

The penalty cost Johnson the series points lead, which he earned following his victory Sunday in Las Vegas.

Davenport wins; Roddick, Agassi advance

INDIAN WELLS, Calif. — Overcoming gusty winds that sent sand swirling and left a layer of grit on the court Monday, Lindsay Davenport beat Meghann Shaughnessy 6-2, 2-6, 6-2 in the Pacific Life Open.

When the wind died down a bit later in the afternoon, it was Andy Roddick who breezed. He needed only 45 minutes for a 6-1, 6-2 victory over Jiri Novak.

Andre Agassi also rolled into the fourth round, beating Andrei Pavel 6-3, 6-4. Maria Sharapova was a 6-2, 6-3 winner over Dinara Safina in a match of Russian teenagers.

Sorlie maintains lead in Iditarod

UNALASKA, Alaska — Norwegian Robert Sorlie charged out of the coastal village of Kotuk more than three hours ahead of his closest pursuers with just a few checkpoints left in the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race.

The next stop is Elim, 48 miles away, and the last three checkpoints and 123 miles remain before the finish line at Nome.

Sorlie, trying to win his second Iditarod in three tries, left Kotuk on Monday evening after a 5-minute stop. Three-time winner Jeff King of Denali left after 3 hours, 17 minutes later, 10 minutes ahead of veteran John Baker of Kotzebue.

Selig to testify before congressional committee

BY RONALD BLUM
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Major League Baseball gave a congressional committee about 400 pages of documents on drug testing and said commissioner Bud Selig was willing to testify at Thursday's hearing on steroid use.

Lawyers for Jason Giambi, Frank Thomas and Rafael Palmeiro asked the committee to withdraw subpoenas for their clients, and lawyers for players and the commissioner's office continued to negotiate with committee staff Monday, trying to narrow the scope of questioning. Bob DuPuy, baseball's chief operating officer, and Rob Manfred, the executive vice president in charge of labor relations, were in Washington to meet with the committee staff.

Just three days before the hearing, it remained unclear whether Mark McGwire, Giambi, Curt Schilling and other current and former stars would testify before the House Government Reform Committee.

Former AL MVP Jose Canseco and Schilling are the only players who have said they are willing to appear in Washington on Thursday.

Selig, who initially offered a top aide as a substitute, reversed course Monday and offered to appear.

"I am proud of the progress baseball has made on the subject of steroids and performance-enhancing drugs and look forward to sharing this information with the committee," he said in a statement. "The players stepped up this past January for an even stricter drug policy beginning this season demonstrating that all

Lawyers for three subpoenaed players work to get them excused from Thursday's hearing



Commissioner Bud Selig said in a statement, "I am proud of the progress baseball has made on the subject of steroids and performance-enhancing drugs and look forward to sharing this information with the committee."

of us in baseball are committed to reaching zero tolerance."

Sammy Sosa, Thomas and Palmeiro were subpoenaed last week along with Canseco, whose recent book alleged several top players used steroids. Union head Donald Fehr also was summoned along with Manfred, baseball executive vice president Sandy Alderson and San Diego general manager Kevin Towers.

Canseco has asked for immunity in order to speak more freely. The committee consulted the Justice Department but didn't expect to hear back until Tuesday evening, according to Canseco's lawyer, Robert Saunooke.

Saunooke said players were unsure whether the committee had power to grant immunity from both federal and state prosecution.

"There's a part of me that would like to believe that once immunity is granted by Congress, there's not a state prosecutor who would thumb their nose at this," he said.

In its subpoena last week, the committee asked for 11 types of documents, including current and past drug-testing agreements and policies going back to 1970, test results from 2003 and 2004, past management bargaining proposals and studies, and details of disciplinary action since 1990 related to drugs. It also asked for results of tests since given to players subject to "cause" testing, a group that includes Darryl Strawberry and Dwight Gooden.

"We gave them roughly 400 pages of documents, substantial compliance with all of the issues they identified in their subpoena relating to our policies and our aggregate numbers," said Stan Brandt, a lawyer for the commissioner's office.

Asked what was not turned over, Brandt responded: "We presented them with the gross figures, how many players were tested and how many turned out positive and for what. We did not give anything relating to individual tests and results."

Brandt said that because of the short time period, baseball could not assure the committee that all relevant information had been submitted.

"Under the circumstances, I think we're pretty confident we got all that they identified," Brandt said.

Committee staff spent Monday examining the documents.

"I don't think they have a sense of what's in there," Robert White, a spokesman for committee chairman Tom Davis said.

David McIntosh and Michael Kantor, lawyers for Giambi, Palmeiro and Thomas, sent three letters to the committee. They asked that Giambi be excused until after the prosecution is over with because of his grand jury testimony.

"Giambi became the focus of especially negative publicity, not only throughout the nation but worldwide," they wrote. "He will have to live with this stigma for the rest of his life."

For Palmeiro, they said "to require that he come to answer baseless charges is unfair." And for Thomas, they said traveling to Washington "could have adverse circulatory effects that could substantially impede Mr. Thomas' recovery" from ankle surgery.

Davis, a Virginia Republican, has threatened to cite any subpoenaed witness who doesn't appear for contempt of Congress. He also has said one of the seven players summoned might be excused, most likely Giambi, who testified in 2003 before a federal grand jury investigating illegal steroid distribution.

A Yankees official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said it

was increasingly likely that Giambi will be excused. However, the subpoena cannot be formally withdrawn until the committee hears from the Justice Department.

Each witness is required to submit 100 copies of his opening statement to the committee by the close of business Tuesday, according to White. But he added that the deadline for statements often is not strictly enforced.

The union and player agents have discussed whether to offer to have a few of the players make statements to the committee but not answer questions, but the players' representatives were not all in favor of that strategy.

Brandt said Selig also was willing to have Alderson testify.

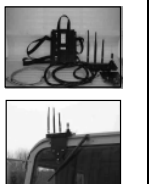
White House press secretary Scott McClellan said the hearings were a congressional matter but added: "Major League Baseball is responding to the message that we've received from Congress, an important step to confront the problem. They're expanding testing and increasing penalties."

Sen. Jim Bunning of Kentucky, a Hall of Fame pitcher invited to testify Thursday, said baseball's antitrust exemption might have to be re-examined if changes aren't made to the sport's drug-testing program, which was recently modified to include a 10-day penalty for first-time offenders.

"The penalty phase of the settlement is the most pathetic thing I've ever seen. They compare it to the major league sports," Bunning said. "If they don't make more progress the next time they sit down and talk about steroid abuse, I think we have the last say. The possibility exists that baseball would be looked at a little closer than it is right now."

AP Sports Writer Howard Fendrich in Washington contributed to this report.

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Cubs ace Prior out indefinitely

The Associated Press

Now the Chicago Cubs have two injured aces.

Mark Prior will be out indefinitely because of inflammation in his right elbow, joining fellow fast-baller Kerry Wood on the sideline for a while.

Wood, slated to start on Opening Day, is out with bursitis in his right shoulder.

Cubs trainer Mark O'Neal said Monday the 24-year-old Prior has some inflammation in the elbow joint and a little irritation to the ulnar nerve.

Prior, an 18-game winner in 2003, missed the first two months of last season because of right Achilles' tendinitis and stiffness in his right elbow. Last July, he missed a start because of discomfort in the elbow. But Prior and O'Neal said the current injury is not related to last year's problem.

Prior made his Cactus League debut Thursday, throwing three innings against Seattle. He said Monday that while doing some routine postgame exercises, he felt comfort in the elbow.

Cubs General Manager Jim Hendry said Prior saw elbow specialist Dr. Lewis Yocum last week

Spring training

and had a precautionary MRI on Sunday.

"There is no damage to the nerve," Hendry said. "The ligament remains exactly the same from the MRI last year."

Prior was supposed to pitch Tuesday against Kansas City but will miss that start. O'Neal said that in addition to rest, Prior is taking anti-inflammatory medication and the Cubs would see how he responds before determining when he will begin throwing again.

He scheduled his first start on April 5 at Arizona.

Wood played catch on flat ground Monday, testing his right shoulder. Pitching coach Larry Rothschild said the right-hander felt fine, and he could throw off a mound on Wednesday.

Rothschild said he expects Wood and Prior to be ready to make their first start of the regular season.

Yankees closer Mariano Rivera also has a sore right elbow, but his problem is not considered serious. He will be out at least a few days with mild bursitis.

"It's not a major concern," manager Joe Torre said in Tampa, Fla. "He will probably pitch by the end of the week."

Rivera is not concerned, and expects to be ready for Opening Day.

"I threw yesterday and everything was fine," Rivera said. "Today, I got to the field and it felt like my elbow was a little sore. It's a little swelling in the elbow. I'll be ready for the season."

At Bradenton, Fla., Todd Ritchie told the Pittsburgh Pirates that he plans to retire, ending his comeback bid after missing nearly two seasons because of a right shoulder injury.

The Los Angeles Dodgers got much better news about Brad Penny in Vero Beach, Fla., where he had an impressive 65-pitch bullpen session.

Penny threw 14 breaking balls in Vero Beach, Fla., where he has as he continues to recover from a nerve injury in his right biceps last season.

"I felt pretty good," he said. "Even the changeups were good, which surprised me because it was the first time I'd thrown them."

If his next session goes well, it's possible Penny could pitch in an exhibition game within one week.

Coaching moves from 2003 felt atop brackets

Jayhawks, Illini, Heels set on paths by hirings

BY TODD HARMONSON
The Orange County Register

Nothing is all that earth-shattering about a college basketball coach being shoved out the door.

It happens all the time, and the aftermaths rarely are felt beyond the borders of a program that pushed away an old problem only to find a new one.

But when it happened two years ago at the epicenter of the game, Tobacco Road, it started a ripple effect that severely shook three of the top teams in the nation and produced tremors that still might be felt in the Final Four in St. Louis.

Few major teams were worse at the end of the 2003 season than North Carolina, but nearly two years after the ouster of coach Matt Doherty, the Tar Heels were selected Sunday as a No. 1 seed for the NCAA tournament.

"To think of that point and where we are right now, I never had those thoughts," said Roy Williams, the former North Carolina assistant the Tar Heels lured home from Kansas as Doherty's replacement. "I just couldn't do that."

And it's nearly as difficult to imagine that Illinois and Kansas could be right at the top with North Carolina after they took the direct hits created by Williams' move to Chapel Hill, N.C.

The Jayhawks replaced the coach who had taken them to the



The careers of Kansas coach Bill Self (left), Illinois coach Bruce Weber (center) and North Carolina coach Roy Williams (right) intertwined two years ago as North Carolina sought to replace its coach. When Williams left Kansas to take over the Tar Heels, Kansas hired former Illini coach Weber, and Weber took over at Illinois.

AP photos

2003 Final Four in New Orleans with the Illini's Bill Self, and Illinois filled Self's spot with Southern Illinois' Bruce Weber.

All Williams, Self and Weber have done this season is go combined 82-11, claim two of the four No. 1 seeds in the tournament that begins this week and establish their teams among the favorites to cut down the nets April 4.

That's not bad at Illinois and Kansas, where things were going rather well under Self and Williams, respectively. But it's an epic turnaround at North Carolina, where Doherty resigned under pressure after an abysmal 8-20 season.

"It's hard to imagine because they took more junk than any team that's ever played at North

Carolina," Williams said on a conference call.

"I don't know if North Carolina has ever gone 8-20, so those kids have hung around and done some really good things."

No team has done more good things this season than top-ranked Illinois, where Weber has shown that his success at Southern Illinois has far more to do with coaching than the caliber of the competition.

Illinois was something of a fan favorite much of the season as it pursued perfection, but even with one loss, the Illini win supporters because of their high-paced, guard-oriented style. And Weber became a sentimental pick last week when he left a Big Ten Tournament game and learned that his mother suddenly had died.

Weber's players, however, have adopted as much of an underdog mentality as possible for the No. 1 team in the nation because they have heard their doubters throughout the season.

"They don't think Illinois is the best team in the country," Illini point guard De Brown told the Chicago Sun-Times. "Just watch TV. They'll tell you we're playing in a weak conference."

"Do I believe them? You see us play every day. We play team basketball. We know how good we are. People have got to fear us."

Before the season, no team was feared more than Kansas. Sure, Self had a lot to do with it, but he also was coaching a group of seniors who had been to the Final Four under Williams and barely

lost to Syracuse in the national title games.

"With expectations, it forces you team to play in a situation where there is a bigger bull's-eye on your back, which naturally should help you play games late in the season because they are pressure-packed games," Self said in a conference call.

"I think if you slide under the radar screen, sometimes you get a false sense of what you are."

The Jayhawks this season have gone from strong favorites to win the national championship to a team that had to fight through a slump, but they still are seeded third in the Syracuse Region.

Kansas has the potential to face North Carolina and Williams in the regional final if both teams advance that far, leading to a battle between the schools which were affected most by his move.

"I still lingers," Williams said. "I started recruiting (Kansas forward) Wayne Simien when he was in the seventh grade. You can't just forget a guy after something like that."

"So that part is still there. I'll always be a Kansas fan. But I won't ever be as big of a Kansas fan as I am now with all those kids on that team that I recruited."

Other recent coaching moves had major impacts on this season's tournament field. Washington as a No. 1 seed? Not without third-year coach Lorenzo Romar. And Ben Howland needed only two seasons to get UCLA into the NCAA tournament, though that might prove a difficult task for new USC coach Tim Floyd.

Still, those moves will go down as relatively minor shakeups on the college basketball landscape compared to the one that started April 1, 2003, and ended one month later.

Actually, there's a strong possibility it will be felt again when the sport's new champion is crowned on April 4.

Play-in teams survived tough seasons to get their shot

BY RUSTY MILLER
The Associated Press

DAYTON, Ohio — As an NCAA moderator introduced Oakland coach Greg Kampe on Monday night, he mentioned the Grizzlies' 12-18 record.

"You really had to bring that up, didn't you?" Kampe sulked in mock disgust. "Couldn't you have said 18-12?"

The Grizzlies and Alabama A&M (18-13) will meet Tuesday night in the play-in game at the University of Dayton after weathering seasons filled with adversity.

Oakland opened its eighth season in Division I on 10-7, losing by an average of 13 points a game. The opponents: Illinois, Marquette, Xavier, Missouri, Texas A&M, Kansas State and Saint Louis.

"We understand our record is not what some people think it should be. We make no apologies," Kampe said. "Our schedule was ranked No. 1 by the Sagarin ratings at the end of the non-conference. I wouldn't do that again, but it definitely prepared us to get here."

The Grizzlies regrouped to win their last five games, winning the Mid-Continent

"We understand our record is not what some people think it should be. We make no apologies."

Greg Kampe
Oakland coach

Conference tournament title by pulling off three upsets on consecutive days by a total of seven points to grab their first NCAA tournament bid. It took Pierre Duker's three-pointer with 1.3 seconds left for Oakland to upset top-seeded Oral Roberts 61-60 in the final.

That shot extended the streak to four years in a row that a team with a losing record has made it into the NCAA field.

Asked what the 0-7 record says about Oakland's players, Alabama A&M forward Joe Martin said, "They're tough. They didn't get down on themselves. They kept playing and they found a way."

A&M's problems weren't on the court. They won the Southwestern Athletic Conference's regular-season title and then rolled to the conference's tournament championship to also make their first trip to the NCAA tournament.

Before the season started, coach Vann Pettaway called his team together to tell them that he had been diagnosed with prostate cancer. His doctors suggested he leave the team to receive treatment but he returned for what has become a magical ride.

"Basketball has been good medicine for me," he said. "They (the doctors) told me to take the year off, but there's no way I could have made it without basketball."

The best medicine he could have received this season was working with his players.

"When I was first diagnosed, everything fell apart. I was through," Pettaway said. "I heard the word cancer and the first thing I thought of was death."

Pettaway will complete radiation treatments when this season ends.

Accustomed to learning X's and O's, his

players picked up a larger lesson in toughness from him.

"It motivated us." Bulldogs star guard Obie Trotter said of his coach's struggle. "That's the type of person he is. He never gave up."

Pettaway is 384-181 in 19 seasons at the 6,000-student school in Normal, Ala., guiding the transition from Division II to Division I in 1999.

Kampe has spent 21 years at Oakland, a campus of 16,500 students in Rochester, Mich., going 348-254 while also leading the move up to Division I.

After all those years on the sidelines, both coaches are enjoying finally making it into the tournament. Neither is worrying about what happens next — win or receive the dubious honor of playing top-seeded North Carolina in its home state on Friday.

Their players refuse to look at the play-in game as an overlooked bout on the undercard.

"It's still the only college game that's being played tomorrow night," Oakland's Courtney Scott said. "I consider it an NCAA tournament game. And we need to win it to continue on."

Smith, Ford not laughing at NCAA's joke

Coaches are less than thrilled as UK and Eastern prepare to play

By MURRAY EVANS
The Associated Press

RICHMOND, Ky. — Travis Ford wore a brave face one day after learning his Eastern Kentucky Colonels would face second-seeded Kentucky in the opening round of the NCAA tournament.

A week ago, the former Kentucky point guard said several times he'd rather Eastern Kentucky not have to face his alma mater in its first tournament appearance since 1979.

But the selection committee matched up the 15th-seeded Colonels (22-8) against their rival from 30 miles away at the Austin Regional.

"I don't think it's either good or bad," Ford said. "We knew we were going to have to play somebody very, very good. We're going to be an underdog. We're going to have to play extremely well. It's going to be an incredible challenge for us."

A pairing of the rival seemed a bit unlikely last week, when Kentucky (25-5) was in the running for a No. 1 seed. But the Wildcats' 70-53 loss to Florida in the South-eastern Conference tournament final on Sunday dropped them to a No. 2 seed.

Ford thought a Kentucky-Eastern Kentucky matchup would be "too obvious" for the tournament committee to consider.

Kentucky coach Tubby Smith shared that sentiment.

"We would prefer that we be able to cheer for them," Smith said. "We're sure our fans would love to cheer for Eastern Kentucky, as well. But I guess the selection committee saw this as a good opportunity to match us up."

"I think they had to look at it and think, 'Let's do this.' I don't know any other reason they'd put two teams 30 miles apart from each other together. I think the NCAA got a little bit of a chuckle out of it at the end."

Travis Ford
Eastern Kentucky coach



Kentucky coach Tubby Smith, left, isn't thrilled with his team's first-round assignment in the NCAA tournament. It's against Eastern Kentucky, a team from a school only 30 miles away that is coached by Travis Ford, a former star guard at Kentucky. Ford likewise dislikes the idea of facing a friend and former colleague.

The decision by the committee to pair the Colonels and Wildcats isn't particularly popular one in central Kentucky, where the schools share a number of fans, although Kentucky loyalists are far more prevalent.

Eastern Kentucky forward Michael Haney even acknowledges growing up as a Kentucky supporter.

"I was born in Missouri, but I moved to Kentucky in the fourth grade," Haney, a senior, said. "I followed them. I was a pretty big UK fan."

Conversely, many Kentucky fans have begun following the Colonels in the five seasons that Ford has been coach. Ford played one season at Missouri before transferring to Kentucky, where

he played until 1994 under coach Rick Pitino and helped the Wildcats reach the Final Four in 1993.

Ford ranks second in career free-throw shooting (88.2 percent) and ninth in career assists at Kentucky. He holds the single-game record for assists with 15 — set against Eastern Kentucky in 1993.

Kentucky-Eastern Kentucky is

one of only two first-round matchups between teams from the same state. Charlotte and North Carolina State were paired in the Syracuse Regional.

"I think there was a reason they did it," Ford said of the committee's rationale. "I think they had to look at it and think, 'Let's do this.' I don't know any other reason they'd put two teams 30 miles apart from each other together."

"I think the NCAA got a little bit of a chuckle out of it at the end."

Smith, who worked with Ford as an assistant to Pitino at Kentucky, is one of Ford's biggest fans. Smith and Ford have remained close — the Eastern Kentucky coach and his staff even stay on a Kentucky practice earlier this season.

"We're excited for Eastern, that they're in," Smith said.

"They're very deserving. We watched (Ford) build that program the right way."

In his eight seasons at Kentucky, Smith has scheduled in-state schools when possible. The Wildcats have played Eastern Kentucky three times during his tenure, most recently last season, a 101-72 win by the Wildcats in Lexington.

"It's not like we don't play (each other)," Smith said. "You hate to play (in the postseason) against friends and peers that you have so much respect for. That's always tough, because somebody has to win and somebody has to lose."

Eastern Kentucky is 0-5 in NCAA A-10 tournament play, while Kentucky has won seven national titles and reached the Final Four 13 times.

Only four 15th-seeded teams have ever won a tournament game. But Haney said the Colonels won't be intimidated.

"Once the ball is thrown up, anything can happen," Haney said. "It's happened four times for a reason — because it's possible."

MAC wondering what it takes to be invited to dance

By MICHAEL MAROT
The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Charlie Coles thought Miami of Ohio's résumé was strong enough for an at-large bid to the NCAA tournament: an 18-11 record, the mid-American Conference regular-season title, 29 in the RPI and a schedule strength of .49.

It didn't impress the 10-member selection committee, and Coles is worried about the message being sent to the MAC, which got just one team into the 65-team field despite five teams ranked in the top 55 of the RPI.

"What it says is that the committee has never respected our league," Coles said Monday, one day after the brackets were announced.

As usual, the six power conferences — Atlantic Coast, Big East, Big Ten, Big 12, Pac-10 and Southeastern — dominated the field, accounting for 31 of the 65 teams, including 25 of 34 at-large bids.

Add soon-to-be Big East members Louisi-

ville and Cincinnati, from Conference USA, and the numbers increase to 33 and 26.

That left only eight spots open for teams in conferences like the MAC and Atlantic 10. Three of those were swallowed up by upset winners in the conference tournaments — something committee chairman Bob Bowlsby suggested Monday played a key part in some teams being left out.

"The committee thought there were better teams, but I would also suggest that some of the upsets may have affected the MAC teams, including Miami and Buffalo," Bowlsby said.

The annual debate about life in a mid-major league didn't end with that explanation.

A year ago, Saint Joseph's earned a top seed. This year, the Hawks (19-11) were doomed by a RPI of 60 and a 3-8 record against nonconference opponents.

Wichita State (20-9) of the Missouri Valley Conference was left out despite an RPI of 47. Three other teams were taken from the MVC — Southern Illinois, Creighton and Northern Iowa.

Northeastern (24-9) of America East didn't even appear on the NCAA's list of other teams considered despite an RPI of 42.

Bowlsby has talked frequently over the past two years about evaluating each school's complete resume, including conference RPI ratings.

According to the NCAA's own numbers, the MAC was the 10th strongest league this year. Conference USA, which ranked ninth, got four bids. The Mountain West and Western Athletic, which ranked 11th and 12th, each had two teams make it.

"You may eliminate somebody by their nonconference schedule or their road record. Those are things that are difficult to separate," Bowlsby said. "You can play yourself out of a bad seed, but you can't play yourself into the tournament. That's the harsh reality."

It's also what Miami, Buffalo, Kent State and Akron are dealing with now. Buffalo (22-9) was No. 32 in the RPI, Kent State No. 32 and Akron No. 35.

It wasn't just the MAC that was disappointed.

"My only hope was that the A-10 has historically done well in the tournament," Saint Joseph's coach Phil Martelli said. "I hoped it would have two representatives. When you're on the razor, you have to give a reason to put you in and a reason to keep you out."

Coles, in his second stint as a MAC coach, understands the predicament for schools like Miami.

If you don't win a large number of games or earn the league's automatic bid, you must bring something else — like a potential first-round draft pick. Coles had that in Dan Majerle at Central Michigan and in Wally Szczerbiak at Miami. Szczerbiak's last season at Miami, 1999, was also the last time the MAC had an at-large team make the NCAA field.

"I think it takes a little star power, and a little location power," Coles said. "People want to talk about Northern Iowa getting in, but what about the Hawks? Some teams play 10 or 11 home games and go 7-9 or 8-8 in the conference. Did they over-achieve? I don't think so."

Slumping Terps, Irish get second chance

BY HOWE RUMBERG

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Maryland and Notre Dame faltered down the stretch, and now they'll have to finish their seasons in the NIT.

"One of our goals was to win the national championship, and right now we're not in the tournament," Maryland forward Nik Caner-Medley said Sunday. "As a team we didn't reach our goals, so I'm disappointed."

Maryland (16-12) lost five of six, including the last four, and was eliminated by Clemson in the first round of the ACC tournament.

The rough finish helped snap its school-record 11 straight trips to the NCAA

tournament. The Terrapins will play Wednesday against Oral Roberts, which is making its first postseason appearance in eight years.

"This is something our guys will be excited about, especially playing Maryland and playing on national TV," Oral Roberts coach Scott Sutton said. "We'll be playing in front of the entire country."

Notre Dame is making its second straight trip to the NIT after losing four of its last five, including an embarrassing 72-65 loss to last-place Rutgers in the first-round of the Big East tournament. Coach Mike Brey felt one more win probably would have clinched an NCAA berth.

"You can say all you want, we had opportu-

nities," Brey said. "You had chances to nail it and you didn't nail it."

Instead, the Fighting Irish will face Holy Cross (24-6) Tuesday in South Bend.

The 68th National Invitation Tournament started Monday with Western Michigan beating Marquette 54-40. The final is on March 31 at Madison Square Garden.

Conference USA had five schools selected for the 68th NIT, the ACC and Mid-American Conference each had four teams chosen, and the Colonial Athletic Association had three. America East is sending two teams — Northeastern and Boston University — to the tournament for the first time. The Big East, Big 12, Pac-10 and Southeastern Conference each had two.

W. Michigan rolls in NIT first round

The Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — Levi Rost had 18 points and Brian Snyder added 11 to lead Western Michigan over Marquette 54-40 in the first round of the NIT on Monday night.

Marquette (19-12) was without leading scorer Travis Diener, who sustained a season-ending hand injury in practice last week.

"What concerned us was they played four games already without Travis and we didn't have him on any of them," Western Michigan coach Steve Hawkins said.

Marquette, making its second straight trip to the NIT after reaching the NCAA Final Four in 2003, made a season-low one three-pointer in 21 attempts.

"The game tonight was certainly not how we built the program during my first six years here," Marquette coach Tom Crean said. "You cannot let your offensive woes carry over to the other end and give up easy baskets. You just can't do it."

The Broncos (20-12) won their first game of the NIT for the second time in three years and will play the winner of Wednesday's matchup between Texas Christian and Miami (Ohio) in the second round.

Brian Snider added 11 points for the Western Michigan, which had its best defensive game since beating Central Michigan 84-39 on Jan. 29.

Sophomore Dameron Mason led Marquette with 14 points, while Marcus Jackson had 11 rebounds. The Golden Eagles were held to less than 40 points for the second time in three games.

Western Michigan scored the first five points of the second half to open a 32-25 lead. But Todd Townsend scored eight of Marquette's first 10 points to help the Golden Eagles close to 37-33.

Marquette then went 5-14 without a point and 6-19 without a field goal, and Western Michigan took a 42-33 lead on Rost's second three-pointer of the half.

Marquette has lost 10 of 15. "I never pictured going out like this," said Townsend, a senior.

NIT

Opening Round

Wednesday
Brevard (17-11) at Butler (22-9)
Hofstra (21-8) at Saint Joseph's (19-11)
2003, 2004, 2005
Virginia Commonwealth (18-12) at Virginia Tech (19-11)
Rice (19-11) at Southwest Missouri State (20-8)
Kent State (20-12) at Western Kentucky (27-8)
Denver (20-10) at San Francisco (16-13)
CS Fullerton (18-10) at Oregon State (17-14)

First Round

Monday
Western Michigan vs. DePaul 8:00 p.m.
Tuesday
Holy Cross (24-6) at Notre Dame (17-11)
Miami (16-12) at South Carolina (15-13)
Temple (16-13) at Virginia Tech (19-11)
DePaul (19-10) at Missouri (16-16)
Wednesday
Texas Christian (19-13) at Miami (Ohio) (19-10)
Boston U. (20-8) at Georgetown (17-12)
Northeastern (23-9) at Memphis (19-11)
Yanberbilt (16-13) at Indiana (15-13)
Clemson (16-15) at Texas A&M (19-9)
Oral Roberts (25-7) at Maryland (16-12)

Quarterfinals

Thursday
Arizona State (17-11) vs. Kentucky (19-13)
Rice/SW Missouri vs. Wake Forest/NCU
CS Fullerton/Oregon St. vs. Denver/San Francisco
Kent St./W. Kentucky vs. Houston/Whitalla St.
Brevard/Butler vs. Hofstra/Saint Joseph's

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SPORTS



Redskins hot on heels of Brown
after former No. 1 overall pick
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Lined up for the slaughter

Tournament limelight is short, bittersweet for sacrificial seeds

By NANCY ARMOUR

The Associated Press

Fairleigh Dickinson coach Tom Green was going over potential NCAA tournament matchups, daydreaming about his Knights playing Wake Forest. Or Washington. Maybe even North Carolina.

Daydreaming? Sounds more like a nightmare.

And 16th-seeded FDU wound up even worse than Green imagined, facing the biggest seed of them all, overall No. 1 Illinois on Thursday.

"Realistically, we know what a long shot it is," Green said Monday. "It's a huge challenge, to say the least."

That's life for the NCAA tournament's little guys. Getting a bid gives small schools like Fairleigh Dickinson, Richmond and Coppin State publicity and national exposure they'd never get otherwise.

But teams seeded 15th and 16th don't get much of a chance to enjoy the limelight, usually gone by the end of the first round in a blowout to one of college basketball's powerhouses.

"I told our players earlier in the week ... we're going to have to upset somebody," said Travis Ford, whose 15th-seeded Eastern Kentucky squad goes up against No. 2 seed Kentucky on Thursday. "We're going to be an underdog. I can guarantee you that."

No 16th seed has ever beaten a No. 1 since the tournament expanded to 64 teams in 1985, and only four No. 15s have upended a second seed. Richmond at Syracuse 73-69 in 1991, Santa Clara upset Arizona 64-61 in 1993, Coppin State stunned South Carolina 78-66 in 1997, and Hampton surprised Iowa State in 2001.

But those few upsets are enough to give every small school hope, no matter how faint.

"It's happened four times for a reason. Because it's possible," said Michael Haney, a forward for Eastern Kentucky.

Haney isn't delusional, just optimistic. Those 15th seeds that pulled off upsets were just like his team and the others that were hard at work Monday, preparing to play behemoths such as Illinois, Duke and Connecticut.

OK, so Santa Clara had Steve Nash when the Broncos knocked off No. 2 Arizona in 1993. But these schools have guys who can play too. Haney ranks fifth in the country in field goal percentage, shooting a blistering 63 percent,



Delaware State players, first-time Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference champions, participate in a celebration in their honor on Monday in Dover, Del. Delaware State (19-13) is the No. 16 seed in the Austin Regional and will face Duke (25-5) in a first-round game on Friday in Charlotte, N.C.

while Obie Trotter of Alabama A&M — the ultimate sacrificial seed as one of the teams in the play-in game — leads the country in steals.

Besides, the law of averages says a No. 16 has to beat a No. 1 one of these days.

Western Carolina came close in 1996, missing two shots in the closing seconds to fall to Purdue 73-71. In 1989, two No. 1s got scares. Georgetown edged Princeton 50-49, but the Hoyas needed two blocks by Alonzo Mourning in the final six seconds. Oklahoma escaped with a 72-71 win after East Tennessee State missed a shot in the final second.

"It goes back to the saying, 'Respect everyone but fear no one,'" Ford said.

And, really, for those schools coming out of the smaller conferences, is there a difference between playing, say, top-seeded Duke and No. 4 Louisville?

"There's more and more parity," said Central Florida coach Kirk Spraw, whose team is seeded 15th for a second straight year and plays No. 2 Connecticut on Friday. "You take the first 15 teams in the country, maybe

"It's probably the biggest long shot ever as far as a 16 seed knocking off a team with one loss."

Tom Green

Fairleigh Dickinson coach

they're a notch above because of a couple of players. But you take programs 25 through 125, and how much difference is there really? I think that spread is getting narrower all the time."

Still, they know they're long shots. In Illinois, Green's squad gets a team that has lost one measly game all year. When Green and his assistants were making their scouting report, they looked for even the slightest weakness, and came up empty.

"It's probably the biggest long shot ever as far as a 16 seed knocking off a team with one loss," Green acknowledged. "I'm going to tell them point-blank a 16 has never beaten a 1," he added.

"I'll tell them about the history of the game a little bit. And tell them we have to play well this week."

But even if they wind up being an answer to a trivia question only diehard fans will remember five years from now, there are worse things than being a 15th and 16th seed. They at least have one more game to play.

This is their big chance to shine, too, with more attention on them in the next three or four days than the entire rest of the season. How many people knew Richmond's nickname was the Spiders before its big upset? Or that Coppin State was in Maryland? And if one of the little guys does pull off an upset — or even makes a serious run — it's guaranteed an arena full of fans. When UCF played Pittsburgh close in its first-round game last year, the Wisconsin fans at the Bradley Center jumped on the Golden Knight's bandwagon so fast it almost tipped over. Pitt eventually won, 53-44.

"It's great exposure for programs like ours, certainly on a national level. And it has a long shelf life," Spraw said. "People remember you were in the tournament,



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and that's obviously good for your school, your academic programs and your athletic programs."

And maybe, just maybe, this will be the year for a historic upset.

"You'd like to think it's going to happen someday, but it hasn't happened in 20 years," Green said. "Hopefully it'll happen in my lifetime, but we'll see."

Selig willing to testify; 3 players seek excused absence

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